THE TRAUMA OF RELOCATION: SOME THEOLOGICAL ISSUES

Christina Norah Mary Bowen

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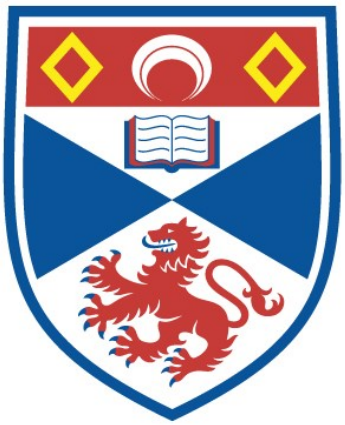

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The Trauma of Relocation:

Some Theological Issues

A thesis submitted

for the degree of Master of Philosophy

by Christina N.M.Bowen

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PREFACE

The reflections in this thesis would have been impossible without the inspiration and support of many people, and I extend grateful thanks to them all.

I wish to thank the faculty of St. Mary's College, especially the late George Hall and Stephen Mackie for their daunting seminars, Michael Keeling for his suggestions and inspiration, and my patient supervisor, Nigel Robb, who constantly challenged me to explore the issues more widely and deeply.

Grateful thanks go to the General Board of Global Ministries of the United Methodist Church of the U.S.A., who commissioned me to work as a missionary in seminaries and churches in Ecuador, Mexico, and Chile; and to Starr Bowen, who shared my commission.

I am also deeply indebted to the Bible study groups in churches in Quito, Mexico City, Concepción and Elie where we sought together to see and to question our daily lives in the light of biblical teaching.

Heartfelt thanks go to my parents, Thomas and Mary Woodsend, for their constant interest, love and support.

My children, Jordan and Cara, were lively and loving companions on so many journeys. They answered my questions, questioned my answers, and provided the space that I needed to write. Thank you.

ABSTRACT

THE TRAUMA OF RELOCATION:

SOME THEOLOGICAL ISSUES

Our age is characterized by the massive mobility of people. We have many loves and attachments; it is painful to lose them in the process of relocation. Ungrieved loss may result in depression or an inability to invest love again. Frequent relocation results in rootlessness, a major factor in our increasing indifference, aggressiveness and ecological disaster.

The purpose of this thesis is to examine the trauma of relocation from a theological perspective, with resources from the social sciences; to examine, too, the pastoral response to that trauma which will enable people to live in covenant relationship with each other, the world, and God.

In order to articulate this study we examine love, loss and the grief process according to the work of Bowlby, Mitchell and Anderson, and Worden; we also look at some complicated responses to the losses of uprooting.

This is followed by a discussion of why the idea of "home" is so emotionally powerful, using resources from theology, the

social sciences, and literature. We then examine images of uprooting and relocation in the stories of the Exodus, the wilderness journey, the exile, and the book of Ruth, with a discussion of how these images speak to uprooted people today. We affirm that the images of journeying and of homesteading need to be not competitive but companion images.

We offer a model of how the relocation process can honour both the loves of the former place and the hope for vocation in the new place. Images of the Companion on the Journey and the Good Samaritan accompany us as we look at the pastoral care issues of families and children in upheaval; and as we extend hospitality to refugees and to the homeless, in accordance with Christ's command.

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INTRODUCTION

One of the distinctive features of our late twentieth century society is the geographical mobility of its people. A recent British survey showed that most children had moved at least four times before they had reached their sixteenth birthday.[1] Employment and family reasons are the chief motives for relocating: young people leave home in pursuit of their vocation, families relocate as their employment demands it, spouses move out of the marital home after divorce, older people move in with their adult children. There are few people now who have lived their entire lives in one place.

Some people, such as diplomats and missionaries, choose the uprooted life. There are also those to whom natural disasters or civil war give no choice: seventeen million refugees worldwide flee oppression and political persecution. There is the inexorable flow of people from the countryside to the cities in a desperate search for work. The numbers of homeless people increase relentlessly in our own country.

"To be rooted is perhaps the most important and least recognized need of the human soul,"[2] writes Simone Weil, yet our century is characterized by increasing rootlessness. The

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[1]Penelope Leach: **Children First** (St. Ives: Penguin, 1994), p.10.
[2] Simone Weil: **The Need for Roots: Prelude to a Declaration of Duties Towards Mankind** (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1978), p.41.

loss of a sense of rootedness in society is one of the causes of malignant aggression, according to Erich Fromm.[3] Wendell Berry[4] observes that upwardly mobile people must not think of any place as "home", because they must be able to leave and forget a place in order to desecrate it, endanger it or destroy it for their own advantage. Our lack of caring for the world as we would care for our own home is one of the reasons that we are threatened with ecological disaster. Peter Berger[5] has described "the homeless mind" as a willingness to live a life of apathy under coercion, devoid both of passion and victory.

As followers of Christ, we have a command to love and to care for our troubled world. The disruptions in our lives and in the world around us can cause a regression to religion for refuge from reality; they can also inspire us to greater faith and deeper vocation. We need images of uprooting which are sources of blessing and vocation, not of destruction and disaster.

In the Christian tradition we have many rich images of uprooting and journeying which deepen faith and restore hope. We have, at the same time, the commands to love, justice and stewardship which mean that uprooting and journeying can not be at the expense of home. The Church offers to those in upheaval the weekly opportunity to remember whom we

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[3] Erich Fromm: **The Anatomy of Human Destructiveness** (London: Cape, 1973).
[4] Wendell Berry: **Home Economics** (Berkeley: North Point Press, 1987).
[5] Peter Berger: **The Homeless Mind** (New York: Random House, 1973).

worship and whose we are; and to be reminded that our hope is grounded in the knowledge that nothing can separate us from the love of God.

My own interest in uprootedness began in the ten years that I spent with my husband and two children in Latin America as a missionary educator and psychologist with the United Methodist Church of the U.S.A. I knew exiles, Indians, and international workers, as well as the people who relocated to and dwelled in the slums of the capitals. I wanted to know how the Church can respond pastorally to the problems of uprooting and relocation which afflicted people from many different backgrounds.

The purpose of this thesis is to examine the trauma of relocation from a theological perspective, with resources from the social sciences; to examine, too, the pastoral response to that trauma which will enable people to live abundant lives and carry out their own unique vocation.

In order to articulate this study, chapter one will examine loves and losses, the grief process, and some complicated responses to the losses of uprooting; it will also examine some gender issues in uprooting.

Chapter two will examine some emotionally powerful meanings of "home", using resources from theology, the social sciences, and literature.

Chapter three examines biblical images of uprooting and relocation, looking at how the people of God responded to upheaval as they reflected on it in faith.

Chapter four looks at a model of the relocation process. Two images, Alistair Campbell's model of the Companion on the Journey, and the Good Samaritan, will accompany us as we look at the pastoral care issues, particularly as we attend to children in upheaval; also as we extend hospitality to refugees and to the homeless, in accordance with Christ's command.

Our use of the Bible might be termed pre-critical. In my own experience with those who were uprooted in Latin America, the Bible was read most days in small groups and it was the lens through which we saw our everyday life and the standard by which we measured ourselves and our society. To those in upheaval, images are more vivid than concepts. Nouwen[6] observes that a story creates space; it offers boundaries to help us find what we seek, but it does not tell us what to do or how to do it. Those who are in crisis yearn for symbols, images and stories in which they can see the works of God's mighty hand. Their hope is rekindled and their faith is strengthened when they can see their own small story embraced by God's great epic of love. That is the task of pastoral care.

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[6] Henri J.M. Nouwen: **The Living Reminder** (San Francisco: Harper and Row, 1982), p.66.

CHAPTER 1

SOME EMOTIONAL RESPONSES TO RELOCATION

Most of us will probably leave one place and move to another several times in the course of our lifetime, usually for employment and family reasons. Even when it is voluntary, desired and anticipated, relocation has negative side-effects: Gilbert Adair[1] reflects popular sentiment when he claims that moving house ranks third after death and divorce as a traumatic experience. Even a straightforward move to another house not far away involves frustration, inconvenience and unanticipated expenses.

However, there may be some factors which complicate the relocation: for example, if there are other changes in a person's life, such as marriage or divorce; if the move is unanticipated or made with reluctance; if it is part of a crisis or trauma situation which shocks the family; if there is conflicting social support or none at all; or if the move entails leaving or losing much that is precious and irreplaceable. All these factors may aggravate the difficulties which accompany a move and continue to disturb a family's new life in spite of their best efforts.

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[1] Gilbert Adair in **The Sunday Times**, 30th October 1994.

Recognizing emotions that fill us with positive energy is not a hard task. Hope and anticipation of better vocational opportunities, or life nearer to our loved ones, energize us and spur us on. However, every entrance is also an exit. Emotions which deplete our energy also affect us during life changes. If they are not dealt with, Campbell notes that "unhealed loss may work on a person insidiously, the creeping paralysis of non-specific depression undermining hope and creativity."[2]

In this chapter we will suggest that if the losses associated with relocation are not adequately grieved, the consequences may be a reluctance to settle in the next place or debilitating conditions such as depression. We will start by describing love and loss and the grief process; then we will describe some complicated responses to relocation and the challenges that they pose to pastoral care, and some gender issues which arise during relocation.

A. LOVE AND LOSS

Much of our energy is spent in working for those things that make our lives meaningful. We love or are deeply attached to many people, places, projects and things. "The capacity to love and be loved is a sign that we are made in

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[2] Alastair V. Campbell: **Rediscovering Pastoral Care** (London: Darton, Longman and Todd, 1986), p.43.

the image of God, distorted by sin though it may be."[3] Different kinds of relationships meet different needs within us. We need relationships which provide us with a place of mutual security and trust, "a hedge against discontinuity" with the past and future. They give us a safe place to know ourselves better, over against the other, and a firm jumping-off point from which to explore and grow. We also need friends who provide us with a sense of shared experience and companionship, a buffer against loneliness. Still others offer us a sense of being needed and an opportunity for giving nurturance. Our relationships with our colleagues provide us with a sense of worth. Family or kin-type relationships provide us with a cushion of continuing assistance that we can count on if necessary. In times of stress we turn for guidance to people whom we see as mentors.[4]

These loves are not just lucky extras to what life is really all about; they are, for most of us, the best part of life. Our loved ones inspire in us the profoundest of human emotions; there is the wonder of cherishing, and being cherished by, the other simply because they are, uniquely, who they are. Such relationships are not intrinsically utilitarian; in the words of Martin Buber, "the purpose of relation is the relation itself - touching the You"[5]. In such a relationship, we can explore the full meaning of what it is to be human. For many people, the best times in their lives

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[3] Kenneth R. Mitchell and Herbert Anderson: **All Our Losses, All Our Griefs: Resources for Pastoral Care** (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1983), p.30.
[4] Categories taken from R.S. Weiss: "The Provisions of Social Relationships" in Z. Rubin (ed.): **Doing unto Others** (Englewood Cliffs, N.J: Prentice-Hall,1974).
[5] Martin Buber: **I and Thou** (Edinburgh: T.&T. Clark, 1970), p.112.

have been times shared in open trust, passionate intimacy, and deepening understanding. Even when our relationships have elements of ambivalence in them - and most close relationships do - they have an essential element of hope that they will continue, enhanced, into the future.

The lack of loving attachments is a dreadful thing. We know of the institutionalized babies in postwar Britain and more recently in Romania, babies who sickened and even died, not for lack of physical care but for lack of personal loving. We are perturbed by the increasing numbers of old and mentally ill people in our hospitals and nursing homes, with never a visitor, who are eventually released to wander homeless through the streets. Strange and reclusive figures, driven mad by isolation, are popular witch figures in children's stories. "The emptiness that fills us when love has gone, or when love has never come to us, may be the ultimate in loneliness"[6].

On a smaller scale, most of us feel incomplete if we have to spend much time in a situation with no close bonds to tie us to other people. George Hall observes that "those things that are worthy of our love are also worthy of our commitment, support, defence, and promotion"[7]; it is our loves and attachments that give our lives their sense of meaning and purpose. We all have a profound need to love and to be loved, to have strong bonds that we can depend on and

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[6] Edgar N. Jackson: **The Many Faces of Grief** (London: SCM Press, 1977), p.32.
[7] George Hall: "Suffering and Tragedy" in **Theology in Scotland,** Vol.1 no.2, Autumn 1994, p.33.

which make us dependable. Although our western culture admires the rugged individualist, for most of us a life spent simply servicing our own needs or drifting through relationships is not an attractive vista.

Given the powerful nature of our attachments, the loss or the threatened loss of important relationships will cause us to react in protest. Losing someone dear to us, whether by death or for some other reason, is described as being like losing a limb. The past which was once so sure, seems suddenly unreal; the present, once technicolor, is in shades of grey; and the future unbearable and without meaning.

Although it is obvious that the death of a loved one is the most painful loss that we suffer, other losses are more frequent and more varied than most people imagine. People with whom we have ties of affection gladden us and sadden us as they move in and out of our lives each academic year. Favourite things get lost, broken and stolen. Our friends get a divorce; our dog dies. We go back home, and we find a municipal car park in its place.

To understand the nature of attachments and loss we must examine the work of John Bowlby[8]. He developed attachment theory to explain why human beings show protest behaviour when they lose a loved one, and why some people are more resilient than others in coping with new situations.

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[8] John Bowlby: **Attachment and Loss, volumes 1-3** (London: Hogarth and New York: Basic Books, 1969 (2nd. edition 1982), 1973, 1980).

Since he included data from many disciplines, his theories may also be considered relevant to other cultures.

Bowlby's basic thesis is that our attachments come from the basic need for safety of all young mammals. They develop in the first year of life and are directed toward a few specific individuals, the mother in particular. As they grow, young children leave the attachment figure for increasingly long periods of time while they learn to use their growing abilities in the environment, but they always return to the attachment figure for support and safety.

Bowlby's theory is similar to Erikson's concept of basic trust[9]: through good parenting the individual sees him/herself as able to rely on him/herself and s/he trusts in the help of others. By way of contrast, insecure or unreliable parenting can lead children to form anxious attachments or none at all. If the bond with attachment figures is endangered, powerful forms of attachment behaviour become activated: clinging, crying, and perhaps angry coercion. When these actions are successful the relationship with the lost attachment figure is re-established and the distress is alleviated. If the danger is not removed, apathy and despair ensue.

It is important to emphasize that a sense of competent resilience develops in a child who is secure in his/her parent's accessibility as s/he explores the environment and

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[9] Erik Erikson: **Childhood and Society** (New York: Norton, 1963).

deals with it effectively; that accessibility is expressed through the sensitivity of the parent to the distress or pleasure signals of her infant. Conversely, if parents ignore or misunderstand their infant's signals, the attachment is more insecure and the infant does not feel safe enough to take risks and thereby grow in competence. Bowlby writes, with reference to adults:

> "It is precisely in conditions of adversity, which evoke feelings of anger, fear, and sadness, either overt and expressed or potential and unexpressed, that breakdowns of mental functioning are likely to occur. And it is precisely on these occasions that the ability or inability to express thoughts and feelings to others, and to seek their comfort and help, proves such a crucial variable. Those who during their childhood have met, when in conditions of adversity, with an understanding response will hope for something similar in the present crisis, whereas those who have met with rebuff and contempt during childhood will expect the same when they are distressed in adult life."[10]

According to Bowlby's theory, the kind of person most likely to cope effectively with any stress, including the stress of uprooting, would be an individual who had a secure base in dependable parenting. This would have enabled them to develop certain characteristics which would make them resilient to adversity: a sense of self-knowledge; a capacity to form healthy attachments throughout life; a sense of her/his own competence and self-worth; and an ability to

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[10] John Bowlby: "Postscript" in Colin Murray Parkes, Joan Stevenson-Hinde, and Peter Marris: **Attachment Across the Life Cycle** (London and New York: Routledge, 1991), p.296.

express feelings and to seek the support of others in adversity.

It follows that all that infants need for their first few years is us, our attentiveness to their signals of pleasure or distress, our loving attention to their uniqueness, our delight in their increasing self-reliance - the same delight that we show in a work project well done, in a deserved promotion, in a desired salary increase.

In our modern society, however, we do not reliably and consistently shower such loving attention on our infants in their first years of life. One reason for this is the double bind that most women today live in: women who work have a realistic fear of losing their jobs and their careers if they stay at home with their infant; many simply cannot afford to stop working. Some fathers are sharing more of this responsibility, but infant care is still largely considered a woman's domain. The childcare options for working mothers may, with luck, be very good; but they are expensive, there is frequently a high staff turnover rate, and they often refuse to care for sick children.

Nevertheless, mothers and fathers have always gone out to work. The burden of childcare has historically been shared with the extended family: grandmothers, aunts and sisters as well as neighbours - there is always someone, and often several caregivers nearby; as family, they have the advantage of being unpaid and deeply involved in the child's welfare.

The infant thus forms secure attachments with a limited number of affectionate caregivers who have much in common with its own mother. It is a recipe for security in childhood and it takes the pressure off the child's parents.

In contrast, our society faces a serious problem in childrearing now: the problem is that our modern mobility results in nuclear families being isolated from these familiar, free, and personally involved care-givers. It is a source of serious concern that it is now much harder to raise secure children who are resilient enough to cope effectively with the stress and disruption which they will undoubtedly encounter in their lifetime.

Mitchell and Anderson[11], whose theories of loss and grief are based on Bowlby's attachment theory, affirm our capacity for loving attachment, and maintain that sadness and protest at loss is a measure of our valuing the uniqueness and particularity of God's creation:

> "The overwhelming testimony of the Christian tradition celebrates covenant, calls for love, fosters community, encourages reconciliation, and demonstrates affection. To be a follower of Christ is to love life and to value people and things that God has given to us in such a way that losing them brings sadness."[12]

They point out that, while death of a loved one is obviously the most drastic loss, losses are not only by death

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[11] Kenneth R. Mitchell and Herbert Anderson: **op. cit.**
[12] Mitchell and Anderson: **ibid.**, p.30.

and not only of people. They are of places, things, ideas, projects, systems, and concepts of self. Although losing them is painful we may allow the loss to go unheeded. The reaction of "I'm just being sentimental" or "I can do without it" or "I'll get another one" trivializes the value and uniqueness of whatever has been lost and detracts from the sacred quality of what makes our lives special. Losses that are recognized can be grieved and "let go". They can be put into a perspective of gratitude in the past instead of continuing to encumber the present and future. Good grieving is a way of recognizing past loves in a way that makes future loves possible and attractive, and affirms us as loving creatures in the image of God.

Their studies have shed light on the nature and variety of human attachments. Ungrieved losses have a more significant impact on us in the long run than those which are grieved. It would seem likely, from their investigations, that a significant reason for the psychic disarray and inability to settle, even rootlessness, of those who are uprooted is their unrecognized grief for all that has been lost in the upheaval.

They describe six types of loss that human beings may undergo; people who are relocating may find themselves experiencing all types of loss.

> "Relationship loss is the ending of opportunities to relate oneself to, talk with, share experiences with, make love to, touch, settle issues with, fight with, and otherwise be

> in the emotional and/or physical presence of a particular other human being."[13]

Partings from dear friends and colleagues are naturally mourned. Children grieve their friends. Some people even hold their pets, their vehicles and their gardens in this kind of affection. Less obvious examples are the partings from all the people with whom there have been bonds of goodwill: church members, neighbours, teachers, the women at the market. Women in particular feel considerable pain at the ripping apart of this fabric, with their mutual dependency on each other to help with childcare, care of the sick, and food. In developing countries, most undertakings are done not through the buying and selling of goods and labour but through a complex network of contacts and their extended families, a webbing that is built up through time and use; there is a mutual dependence which is much more than economic.

The native Indians of the Andes refer to the land as Pacha Mama, another word for 'mother'. They talk about the land as if it were human: it is "cruel", or "generous", or "stubborn". As in some African and Aborigine cultures, they are deeply attached to the land, however unproductive, because their family and tribe has been part of it since stories began. They have been willing to defend it to the death from colonizers. They believe in myths and participate in rituals which bind land, and creation, and religion, and humans, and animals, and plants, together. When native

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[13] Mitchell and Anderson: **ibid.**, p. 37-8.

Indians are turned off their land, then, the grief that they undergo is deep and inconsolable.

Another type of loss is material loss, "the loss of a physical object or of familiar surroundings to which one has an important attachment."[14] All of us have many strong attachments to material objects: our homes, cars, boots, books, cooking pots, carpentry tools. We know that nostalgic ache felt by travellers for their family home, for the curve of the hills, the sunlight on the roofs, the particular way that the wind blows. Some things we have which are valued for some intrinsic quality; for their beauty, perhaps, or their rarity. Other things have value which is extrinsic: they are important because of their origin or their associations - for example, a gift from someone deeply loved, such as a wedding ring; or something that once belonged to a beloved family member, such as an old Bible; or something with ritual or milestone significance, such as the cemetery where family members are buried, or the machete that an Indian boy receives from his father at puberty; or something which is the last and only reminder of someone, something, someplace much loved: a pipe, a toy, a fading photograph.

The strong protest registered when separated from things like these, or when they are destroyed by fire or flood, show how deep these attachments are. Many people yearn or search obsessively for the lost object or have a strong urge to replace it. They find, however, that the replacement is

[14] Mitchell and Anderson, **ibid.**, p. 36.

never the same as the original, even if it is better in quality or costs more. We cannot pass on to others the associations and symbolism imbued in our possessions; in the words of Alfred Schutz, "Graves and reminiscences can neither be transferred nor conquered."[15] In western society we tend to think of such attachments to objects as over-materialistic, which is a label that Christians try to avoid; or immature and sentimental; or a kind of psychological luxury when we should be getting on with the "real" business of life. In reality, such attachments may be imbued with profound and immeasurable significance. Valuing these possessions is completely distinct from the materialistic accumulation of unlimited consumer items that is encouraged in modern society.

A third type of loss is intrapsychic loss, which "....is the experience of losing an emotionally important image of oneself, losing the possibilities of 'what might have been', abandonment of plans for a particular future, the dying of a dream."[16] Any loss which disrupts the central purposes of life will provoke severe grief. Thus the international aid worker who must leave a country before his/her project bears fruit suffers grief. The schoolchild feels torn from the future s/he had imagined s/he would have had at a familiar school, as the family is moved once again by the army; the grandmother grieves the loss of seeing her grandchildren grow up when they relocate to a faraway town. Most of us

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[15] Alfred Schutz: "The Stranger" in **Collected Papers II: Studies in Social Theory** (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1964), p.97.
[16] Mitchell and Anderson: **op. cit.**, p.40.

are sad to leave work that we have enjoyed; even the successful completion of a task, such as a work project, a building, or a campaign, is often accompanied by sadness brought on by the loss of something that provided purpose and meaning to life.

One of the most traumatic intrapsychic losses in relocating is the loss of identity. A feeling frequently expressed by movers is: "Nobody knows who I am." Our deepest human dread is of our own disintegration or non-existence; we fear our own loneliness and meaninglessness. In his discussions on healthy narcissism, Stolorow states that "Mental activity is narcissistic to the degree that its function is to maintain the structural cohesiveness, temporal stability, and positive affective colouring of the self-representation."[17] McCollum[18] observes that the loss of social identity, the mirroring back to us of our worth, gives rise to a significant narcissistic disequilibrium in most movers.

The fourth type of loss described by Mitchell and Anderson is functional loss. "Powerful grief can be evoked when we lose some of the muscular or neurological functions of the body."[19] It tends to be associated with the aging process: the loss of hearing, the need for glasses. It is the clumsy groping of the traveller in a strange place who wakes

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[17] R.D. Stolorow: "Toward a Functional Definition of Narcissism" in **The International Journal of Psychoanalysis**, 56, 1975, 179-185.
[18] Audrey T. McCollum: **The Trauma of Moving: Psychological Issues for Women** (Newbury Park, California: Sage Publications Inc., 1990), p.79.
[19] Mitchell and Anderson: **op. cit.**, p.41.

up suddenly from a deep sleep and cannot remember, in the dark, where the light switch is. Functional loss carries with it a loss of autonomy and coordination. There is a dependency on the patient goodwill and interpretations of others which does not fit well with normal independence. Even those who are fluent in a new language cannot at first make sense of the references, the jokes, or the silences of another culture. The teenager in a new school feels embarrassed because she cannot follow the "cool" language of her classmates; the rural Mexican, expert at coaxing a crop out of the dry soil of the countryside, carries his now-useless machete into the capital city and feels at a complete loss when he has to cross eight lanes of traffic.

The fifth type of loss outlined by Mitchell and Anderson is role loss. "The loss of a specific role or of one's accustomed place in a social network is experienced as role loss."[20] Most people have a great deal of identity invested in their role in their workplace or within a social network, and feel completely disorientated when faced with sudden change or loss of role. The Ecuadorean country peasant, deeply respected for his position of traditional authority within the extended family, or for her wisdom in the arts of healing, must move to the city; and not only must they lose face as they have to depend on a grandchild to translate and explain everything; but the very country traditions and customs which had once given them a respected role become objects of derision, and the elders feel bewilderment and grief.

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[20] Mitchell and Anderson: **ibid.**, p.42.

The sixth type of loss is systemic loss, "To understand it, we must first recall that human beings usually belong to some interactional system in which patterns of behaviour develop over time."[21] One can count on certain functions being performed in the system even without a strong personal relationship to others in the system. Thus members of extended families feel grief when the younger ones move away to look for work and they cannot count on support any more during financial hardship or sickness or old age. Communities mourn the loss of gossip at the communal washhouse or the market square. In the Mexican towns just south of the U.S. border, it is the women who have employment in the garment factories and the men who are unemployed; the men, raised in a tradition where women stay at home and men go out to work, suffer great loss in a system which does not satisfy them.

There are other variables, as Mitchell and Anderson point out, to loss. One is the perceived avoidability, an immensely difficult issue for some families. Some careers, such as the forces and the ministry, require frequent moves of their employees, but each particular move appears to the family to have some negotiability. Children usually resist moving from the known to an unknown place, and as they grow older they grow increasingly resistant.

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[21] Mitchell and Anderson: **ibid.**, p.44.

Spouses, too, feel that their careers and preferences should be given important consideration, especially if they keep a tally of the significant sacrifices that they have made in past moves. In his research on ministers, Robb[22] observes that a spouse's career can prevent a minister considering a move, and locks the minister into an unhealthy or damaging parish appointment, thereby increasing resentment; or else the mobility involves a sacrifice of the career prospects of the spouse for "the call" of the minister. So where the move is seen as avoidable or negotiable, protest and anger within the family is usually stronger than if the move is seen as unavoidable, for example as the result of a natural disaster.

The move may have been brought about the breadwinner losing his/her job, making some unwise decision, or being involved in a scandal, and the family members must suffer great losses which, to them, could have been avoided. Blaming and guilt compound the already difficult feelings of anger and loss. There is also, according to Mitchell and Anderson, the leaving/being left complex. Even if they chose to stay, those who are left behind tend to feel abandoned, helpless and angry. Those who leave tend to feel guilty at abandoning them. This guilt is hard to deal with for the international worker who feels that none of his/her projects can continue without his/her personal involvement, or for the young family in Mexico who must leave their aging parents in the country to look for work in the city.

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[22] Nigel J. Robb: **Bushfire Pilgrimage.** Master of Theology thesis. (Princeton Seminary, 1989).

Another variable is the perception that the loss is temporary. Many, perhaps most, migrants, refugees and exiles have this perception: "when things get back to normal" - when there is a change of political party, when the floods subside, when the old man dies - they will return home. There develops the paradox of aching, unending loss. Healthy grieving is impeded because they do not have to acknowledge that the past is gone for ever. In her research on Chilean exiles in the U.S., Eastmond[23] observes that exile is a state of suspended animation or limbo. Life may become permanently provisional and tentative, because neither the return home nor settlement in the new place is guaranteed. Participation in or adapting to life in the new country may cause a profound moral dilemma, because it means betraying the commitments of the past and forfeiting life in the homeland.

The losses become obvious only when they do return home. Not only are the changes at home and in themselves difficult to deal with; so is the interpretation of the new place. In the words of Heraclitus, "You can't step into the same river twice." Similarly, Schutz wrote:

> "...The home to which he returns is by no means the home he left or the home which he recalled and longed for during his absence. And, for the same reason, the homecomer is not the

[23]Maria Eastmond: "Reconstructing Life: Chilean Refugee Women and the Dilemmas of Exile" in Gina Buijs: **Migrant Women: Crossing Boundaries and Changing Identities** (Providence and London: Berg Publishers, 1993), p.39.

> same man who left. He is neither the same for himself nor for those who await his return."[24]

Nevertheless, not all sojourns in other places mean exile. Diplomats and international workers may spend their working life in other countries without living in limbo if they know that they have a home to which they are able to return regularly. For them there are no issues of betrayal, because they do not have to forfeit life in one place in order to make commitments in the other.

B. GRIEF

As Christians, it is important to affirm the importance of loving attachments and the reality of their loss at relocation. We affirm grieving as a necessary and healthy healing process in order for the person to move on, unencumbered, to the next place. Grief that is unrecognized or unexpressed may emerge in distorted forms, by lowering the body's immune system, unexplained depression, smouldering anger, or emotional withdrawal. Mourning is a process that allows for adaptation to loss or change, so the avoidance or absence of mourning will interfere with the acceptance of loss and change.

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[24] Alfred Schutz: "TheHomecomer" in Schutz: **op. cit.**, p.116.

Grief is painful and so it is often avoided, consciously or unconsciously. Detachment is one way of avoiding it. Another common way of avoiding it is the denial that anything really has changed or will change. The busy work of packing up and saying farewells stimulates an emotional "high" which can mask the acknowledgement the impending losses. However, movers are then vulnerable to unpredictable breakdowns provoked by something apparently insignificant.

There are various reasons for failing to grieve during the process of relocation. Worden's[25] study of bereavement is significant here. Relationships which caused difficulty are harder to grieve, because the difficult feelings would have to be re-experienced; so the pain is avoided. Ambivalent or hostile relationships which give rise to feelings of anger, guilt and shame, highly narcissistic relationships, and very dependent relationships are all harder to grieve. Situations of multiple loss, normal in a relocation, are also harder to grieve. Frequent movers become increasingly depressed, isolated and withdrawn as they suffer from "bereavement overload" and refuse, consciously or unconsciously, to make any more emotional investment.

People who have had complicated grief reactions in the past, for example people with a history of depressive illness, are more likely to have complicated reactions again.

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[25] William J.Worden: **Grief Counselling and Grief Therapy: a Handbook for the Mental Health Practitioner** (2nd edition) (London: Routledge, 1991).

Simos[26] points out that past losses have an impact on current and future losses and separations and on the capacity to make future attachments. Old memories of loss are reawakened with every new move; unfinished grief from the past merges with present grief, making it more acute.

By way of contrast, people with a history of successful grief resolutions have an increased likelihood of successful resolution in the future. Their success hinges not on avoiding deep friendships or on avoiding grief. They are the people who, according to Bowlby, had secure attachments in infancy, which gives them a sense of inner resilience, hopefulness and confidence in expressing themselves and in enlisting the support of others.

Worden shows that grief is avoided when the loss is socially unspeakable, socially negated, or a supportive social network is unavailable. The losses of relocation are unspeakable in the sense that we struggle for words to express them in a way that a listener can hear them sympathetically: loss of safety, of familiarity, of physical and social identity, of feelings of competence and worth. These are not concepts which spring to the lips of most people so they are, literally, unspeakable.

He also says that grief is avoided when the loss is socially negated. In our culture most people assume that

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[26] B.G.Simos: **A Time to Grieve** (New York: Family Service Association, 1979), quoted in Worden: **ibid.**, p.67.

relocation is a positive experience and so the negative emotions are bewildering. There is widespread denial of the stress and pain involved in relocating, so the grief involved is unrecognized. Many people feel anxiety and shame at these intense emotions, suspecting that there must be something wrong with them.

A third social dimension that may cause complications in grieving is the absence of a social support network. When human bonds are torn apart, there is a longing for comfort. They may find less support than usual in the family that moves with them, because each member has their own stresses and losses, and each of them needs more affirmation and nurturing. The movers find much less support from their old friends, not only because they are now far away, but also because they may be in the process of withdrawing emotionally from the friendship, or dealing with feelings of sorrow or anger for having been "deserted" by the movers. Members of the new community may feel threatened by grieving incomers, as if their community is being criticized. They may have forgotten how painful their own transitions to that same community were.

McCollum describes another strategy familiar among caregivers to avoid grief: what she calls "shrinking the distress by contrast with greater pains"[27]. The mover feels that their own pain in comparison with the greater suffering of others is trivial, and therefore dismisses it. However, she

[27] McCollum: **op. cit.**, p.91.

points out that the relief is only temporary, because only a person's own experiences have reality for them. Grief is never trivial; it is always significant behaviour. Further, the sudden unexpected upwelling of grief then arouses shame.

Grief is inescapable. Our society applauds cheerfulness in adversity, calling it "courage" or "faith", but it is not necessarily healthy. The absence of grief at significant loss is a sign, not of good but of poor emotional health. It diminishes a person's well-being and may be expressed in distorted forms. Mourning is a process which allows adaptation, and the absence of mourning interferes with the acceptance of reality.

It is necessary to work through grief in order to move on, healed, to the next place. Worden describes the tasks of grief: accepting the reality of the loss; fully experiencing the protest, pain and other emotions; adjusting to the new environment; and the emotional relocation of the relationship and moving on with life.

Sustained grief is unendurable. Letting go of the past is neither smooth nor abrupt; it is more like a spiral process involving both strong emotion and calm competence. As long as the ties of the last place have not been loosened, a person is not ready to form ties in the new place. For that reason mourning is considered to be a process rather than a state. It is a process of accepting that the former ties can no longer bind in the same intimate way: unravelling them; and

reinvesting that energy in forming binding ties in the new place. The process does not devalue the old ties; rather, it gives them a respected place in the past, or changes the nature of the relationship to a less intense but still a meaningful one.

The mourning process is over when the person finds that they have emotional energy to invest in new relationships in the new place. There is a feeling of trust and hopefulness in other encounters. The new place, once without significance, strange and unattractive, becomes familiar, takes on meaning, and appears lovable.

C. COMPLICATED RESPONSES TO RELOCATION

As Christians we affirm good grieving as a healthful response to loss. Losses which are not grieved and the other events associated with relocation may cause debilitating emotional responses. We undertake now a short description of four of these responses: depression, anxiety, crisis, and post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), with the intention of describing appropriate pastoral care in later chapters.

They have some characteristics in common. First, they are usually temporary manifestations of disequilibrium. Second, they are responses which are normal but neither inevitable nor desirable, since they cripple an individual's

capacity for concern for others. Third, they are emotional reactions to an event which is perceived as too great and too threatening for the individual's coping mechanisms.

1. Depression

Jacobson[28] differentiates between grief and depression in this way: grief is a state of sadness provoked by loss, while depression is a state of diminished self-esteem provoked by failure. Depression includes feelings of worthlessness, hopelessness, indecisiveness and shame; it is accompanied by insomnia, loss of energy, fatigue, social withdrawal, and the inhibition of thought, action, emotion and spiritual life. Fairchild[29] observes that depression may be brought on through unfinished mourning of earlier losses, aggravated by the latest relocation; it may also be brought on by an individual's negative perception of the future. It may be brought on by feelings of helplessness surrounding the circumstances of the move, or by guilt caused by a sense of failure to live up to their own expectations. Unexpressed anger turned inwards may also cause depression, and shows up in sulking, irritability, and forgetfulness which ensure that others will suffer.

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[28] E. Jacobson: **Depression: Comparative Studies of Normal, Neurotic and Psychotic Conditions** (New York: International Universities Press, 1971).
[29] R.W. Fairchild in Rodney J. Hunter (ed.): **Dictionary of Pastoral Care and Counselling** (Nashville: Abingdon, 1990).

Various investigations show a link between relocation and depression. Paykel et al.[30] found that job changes and life events associated with separation and loss, prior to the onset of illness, comprised the realm in which psychiatrically depressed patients were most significantly affected. Weissman and Paykel[31] noticed that the onset of depression in women had often been preceded by a move, even when moves were voluntary and seemingly desirable. Viney and Bazeley[32] found that levels of separation anxiety and shame were as high among recent movers as among psychiatric patients; but it was a temporary phenomenon.

In his observations of corporate wives, Seidenberg[33] points out that while a husband's credentials are easily transferable, and he may have gained status, the identities of the wife and children are rarely transferable. In a new community they have to create them all over again, starting from the bottom, with little support. Their emotional reserves become exhausted. Grinberg and Grinberg[34] write of the "persecutory, confusional and depressive anxieties" that all international migrants experience in varying degrees. These migrants mourn for "lost aspects of self". Nobody

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[30] E.S. Paykel, J.K. Myers, M.N. Dienelt, G.L. Klerman, J.J. Lindenthal & M.P. Pepper: "Life Events and Depression" in **Archives of General Psychiatry,** 21, 1969, 753-760.

[31] M.M. Weissman and E.S. Paykel: "Moving and Depression in Women" in **Society,** 9, 1972, 24-28.

[32] L.L. Viney and P. Bazeley: "The Affective Reactions of Housewives to Community Relocations" in **Journal of Community Psychology,** 5, 1977, 37-45.

[33] R. Seidenberg: **Corporate Wives - Corporate Casualties?** (Garden City, NY: Anchor Press, 1973).

[34] L. Grinberg and R. Grinberg: "Psychoanalytic Study of Migration: its Normal and Pathological Aspects" in **Journal of the American Psychanalytic Association,** 32, 1984, 32-38.

would know their family, they say; nobody would know who they are. From corporate wives to international migrants, it seems that the loss of identity expressed in the phrase "Nobody knows who I am" is a key factor in making relocation traumatic.

2. Anxiety

It is natural to feel some anxiety in starting a new job, a new project or a new school, and in meeting new people. This anxiety can be fruitful in that it drives us to do well. Our lack of competence in a new place may also be a source of anxiety: McCollum observes that the ability to make accurate assumptions about our environment is necessary for a sense of mastery in order to deal successfully with what is happening to us and to those who depend on us. McCollum found that people who move into a new neighbourhood may anticipate at least half a year of investigation, risk-taking and frustration to locate and use effectively the goods, services and facilities that they need such as the schools, the market, the doctor and the library.

Movers also feel anxious about their loss of control. Most movers find that disorganization, confusion and anxiety are unavoidable. Mishaps that are normally handled effectively and light-heartedly tend to threaten a mover's vulnerable sense of competence. Some people quickly gain control over the physical turmoil; however, not everyone has

the time or the emotional energy to accomplish that. Others find themselves depleted by feelings of failure and a sense of guilt for not being able to manage better; McCollum observes that depression and anxiety can be powerful impediments to recreating a home. There may also be an underlying anxiety that this move may not be successful, or another move will follow; so there is hesitancy in getting too involved.

Uncertainty creates anxiety and can be emotionally exhausting. There are occasions when, for family or employment reasons, we do not know if we will have to relocate, or when, or to where, or for how long; for example, a minister hoping for a call to another charge, or a teenager waiting to be accepted for a training course. In uncertain times we avoid making commitments, and life takes on a parenthetical, inconsequential quality. At the same time, it is surprisingly hard to undertake simple activities or to accomplish them well. Depression and despair can easily set in if no resolution is imminent.

Perceived danger is a powerful source of anxiety. One of the difficulties of uprooting is that we leave the area where the dangers are known and so are the places of safety; where problems are encountered, but the solutions are available. People who relocate have to identify the dangers and problems, the safe places and the solutions in the new place. Refugees fear certain danger behind them as well as the uncertain future before them.

Another source of anxiety in developed societies is the fragility of what Giddens calls our sense of "ontological security"[35]. We live in a world with fragmented and conflicting interpretations; the old sources of authority, such as ancestors and priests, are gone. There is no longer an overarching frame of reference that shelters us all. This means that, according to Giddens, we must put continuous and considerable effort into the maintenance of our self-identity. If there is any disruption to our fragile sense of trust in the world, emotional chaos may threaten with "the prospect of being overwhelmed by anxieties that reach to the very roots of our 'being in the world'."[36] Since relocation is associated with narcissistic disequilibrium and reduced social support, it is not surprising that many people are overwhelmed with anxiety when they have to uproot.

3. Crisis

A crisis is "an individual's internal reaction to an external hazard"[37]. A person experiences a reversible emotional dysfunction and temporary loss of coping abilities which is the result of an emotional reaction to an event which s/he perceives as threatening. Most people enter a state of crisis because they perceive either the loss or threatened loss of something very important to them; some

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[35] Anthony Giddins: **Modernity and Self-Identity** (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1991), p.36.
[36] Anthony Giddins: **ibid.**, p.37.
[37] Howard W. Stone: **Crisis Counselling** (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1976), p.5.

people may perceive any change as loss. Stone notes that "moving away from a situation of security", as in relocation, may itself be a situational crisis[38]; or there may be a situation of multiple loss such as death, divorce, redundancy, as well as the relocation itself. Culture shock, caused by suddenly having to survive in a society markedly different from one's own society, may provoke a crisis reaction.

The individual's first attempts to cope fail, including seeking support from their usual sources of support; relocation, however, is the very time when there is less social support than usual. People in crisis typically withdraw from important relationships, while, paradoxically, at the same time becoming more dependent and clinging; their behaviour in work, family and social activities becomes chaotic and disorganized. If they are under pressure to pack up, this disordered behaviour simply adds to the crisis.

There is "cognitive dissonance"[39] between new information which is incongruent with the pre-crisis way of his/her thinking about him/herself, relationships, and the world. S/He may lose all concept of time, including the sense of their own past and future existence. Self-identity may be compromised or temporarily lost.

A significant feature of crisis behaviour is "heightened psychological accessibility".[40] This is characterized by

[38] Stone: **ibid.**, p.5.
[39] Stone: **ibid.**, p.17.
[40] Stone: **ibid.**, p.20.

emotional intensity, cognitive dissonance, and heightened vulnerability; it peaks quickly and lasts for up to six weeks. A person in crisis wants to re-establish stability and therefore is vulnerable to any influence which will help them to resolve the crisis.

Stone[41] observes that a history of successful crisis resolution increases an individual's likelihood of resolving future crises successfully. This is an example of Bowlby's theory that early competence paves the way for future resilience.

4. Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD)

If a person or a family has recently experienced a traumatic event, PTSD may increase the trauma of relocation. It is caused by "an event that is outside the range of usual human experience and would be markedly distressing to almost anyone"[42]; e.g. major accident, natural disaster, domestic violence, combat, criminal assault, rape, or sexual and physical abuse, with family violence as the most frequent source of trauma. After a trauma most people show temporary symptoms of crisis, but everybody handles trauma their own way and not everyone will suffer PTSD.

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[41] Stone: **ibid.**, p.23.

[42] David W. Foy, Kent D.Drescher, Allan G. Fitz, Kevin R. Kennedy: "Posttraumatic Stress Disorder" in Robert J. Wicks and Richard D. Parsons: **Clinical Handbook of Pastoral Counselling, Volume 2** (Mahwah: Paulist Press,1993), p.622.

A person with PTSD may suffer persistent intrusive dreams or flashbacks and they may avoid everything reminding them of the event, and reminders may cause panic. They may show decreased personal involvement and general emotional numbing. They may feel hypervigilant, extremely defensive and helpless; their concentration and memory may be impaired. They may suffer intense emotions such as betrayal, estrangement, guilt, shame, anger, sorrow, and grief; they need reassurance that this is normal and not a sign of lack of faith. Traumatized people need strong social support to process their experiences in a safe environment: for example, it has been found that rape survivors who have supportive networks cope much better than women without them.[43] However, social support is scarcer around the time of relocation. Although trauma affects a person's entire life, within three months many survivors are recovering.

Sudden trauma shatters our basic life assumptions about the safety and fairness of the world and about our own goodness. Again echoing Bowlby, previous good life experiences provide resilience against the effect of trauma.

These complicated responses to the events associated with relocation cause pain to the individuals and to those around them. They also afford opportunities to gain new insights, to cast off outgrown ways of thinking, to grow in courage and faith and hope, and to hearken to vocational yearnings if good social support and guidance is offered.

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[43] Foy et al: **ibid.**, p.628.

That is one of the tasks of pastoral care, as we shall see in the final chapter.

D. GENDER ISSUES

It is worth exploring some of the gender issues that arise in relocation because it is an especially stressful time for couples and families. Audrey McCollum, an experienced psychotherapist who chose to move to another college town in the U.S. with her husband, was astonished by the wrenching pain of her relocation. She therefore investigated the experiences and emotions of other women, most of them well-educated, as they moved into her town[44]. She discovered that relocation is much more traumatic for women than for men, a finding that is borne out both by popular opinion and by research: we have already mentioned Weissman and Paykel's[45] observation of a high correlation between mental depression in women and moving.

McCollum cites some reasons for the difficulties that women in particular experience in relocation. One reason is that there are psychological obstacles to women making wise choices. One of these obstacles is their tendency to merge with loved ones, which means that they do not look out for their own needs. Another obstacle is that they experience

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[44] McCollum: **op. cit.**
[45] Weissman and Paykel: **op. cit.**

contradictory states of both helplessness and power in their sense of self; and another is their belief in the "myth of the transportable home-maker"[46]. Another reason is that they experience extensive losses such as home and friends. They also experience an inner sense of dispersion and a loss in their sense of continuous identity. The result is that many women suffer depression in their new place, in spite of the fact that they may have chosen to move and had time to prepare for it. Their husbands and partners tend to find relocation more straightforward and successful.

It is worth comparing and contrasting her research with the work of Eastmond[47] who studied Chilean women who fled with their husbands and families to exile in California from political persecution in Chile, highlighting six points of comparison:

First, there is the reason for relocation. McCollum observes that it is still the tradition for men to relocate to further their education or career, while women relocate to be with them; it is still uncommon for men to relocate in order to be with women. The unjust assumptions behind this tradition anger many women even while they sacrifice their careers to follow their men. In contrast, the Chilean women and men fled Chile together, all of their lives

[46] McCollum describes this as the popular myth that says, "I can do that anywhere." It ignores the fact that it takes time and use to build up the complex network of supportive connections which enables a woman to find her vocation as a homemaker with infants, or to balance both her vocation and her family responsibilities. In fact, transporting the woman's home-making work is usually much more wrenching than a mere change of job for the man.

[47] Eastmond: **op. cit.**

endangered by the brutal regime. Men and women were united against the dictatorship.

Second, there is the work of relocation. The U.S. women underwent the emotional upheaval associated with the sorting and packing of belongings as well as the responsibility of the trivial and time-consuming details of relocating, although they had their own careers, while the men simply worked harder at finishing up their work. In contrast, the exiles had no time to take many possessions with them, so this justice issue did not cause conflict between the couples.

Third, there is the group/individual issue. The U.S. families moved individually. The women especially mourned the loss of dear friends and colleagues; many women sighed in the new place, "Nobody knows who I am." The Chileans, in contrast, fled as a group. They did not suffer the same loneliness nor loss of identity. Their friends, all of similar political sympathies, went with them. It is worth noting that the wives of army chaplains, doctors and paymasters, who generally move individually, find relocation much more difficult than regimental wives who move in groups.

Fourth, there is the issue of grief or its avoidance. In the light of Worden's research on grief, the U.S. women found it hard to grieve because their losses were unspeakable, socially negated, and without social support. Their losses were unspeakable because they lost feelings of competence,

safety and identity which, we have noted, are hard to describe even to oneself. Their losses were socially negated because they lived in a double bind: they had chosen to move and therefore assumed that they should not be sad; and grieving for former homes and friends seems too unliberated and dependent for educated women. Their losses were not socially supported because they had no new friends to confide in and their husbands were "transitionally unavailable".

In contrast, the Chilean women faced dreadful losses but they had not lost friends nor identity, and they had moved from danger to safety. Their losses were socially accepted because everybody in the group had similar losses and they supported each other's grieving; as full-time home-makers, all could freely admit to the loss of home.

The fifth issue is women's careers. The U.S. women did not, in general, relocate in order to benefit their careers, and many found they had to start near the bottom again; McCollum commented that they had sabotaged their own future well-being by not researching well enough their own prospects in advance, and they regretted their lack of forethought. In contrast, most of the Chilean women were housewives before leaving Chile, and they enjoyed learning new skills and having independent income in California. They also enjoyed the better prospects and opportunities which the move to the U.S. gave to their children.

The sixth issue is men's careers. By means of relocation the U.S. men advanced their own interests, enabled, consciously or unconsciously, by the sacrifice of the women. At the same time they were transitionally unavailable to the women as they put in extra work. In contrast, the Chilean men moved from a situation in Chile of being skilled labourers and politically active in their trade unions, to work in the U.S. that did not require solidarity or heroism; many men suffered loss of meaning and depression.

Most of the men in the U.S. study settled down well; however, many of the U.S. women suffered depression or took a long time to resettle. In the Chilean study, however, it was the men who remained unsettled, exiled in the U.S., and were keen to return to Chile when, some years later, it became safe to do so. The women and children, in contrast, did not find the relocation traumatic, settled well in California, and did not want to return to Chile.

Looking at these findings in the light of Bowlby's attachment theory, it would not be unreasonable to suggest that the Chilean women and the U.S. men behaved with resilience and self-worth: they had a hopeful attitude to the future and they made the most of the opportunities of the next place. In contrast, McCollum observed that the U.S. women showed low self-esteem by disregarding their own needs, and she observed that, like many women, they needed

an ethic of self-care such as that described by Gilligan[48]. The U.S. women and the Chilean men were hampered by their emotional states from making the most of opportunities in the next place: the women by their depression, the men by their mourning for lost meaning.

In the light of Worden's research on grief, the Chilean women had social support for their grief work and for continuity of their sense of identity with their co-exiles, and the U.S. men were able to share their losses with their wives; neither group experienced identity problems. The Chilean men had support for their losses but no way of continuing with their previous identity. The U.S. women had no social support for their unspeakable losses; however, their grief, anxiety, depression and shame were reduced when they found out that their feelings were common and normal. Parallels could be made here with other experiences that arouse shame or guilt: for example, mental illness, alcoholism, domestic violence, and incest. When sufferers find that they are not alone, abnormal or insane, there is a great sense of relief, and healing and recovery can be made.

The comparison between the two groups demonstrates that it is not accurate to say that relocation is necessarily more traumatic for women, although it may be true for populations like McCollum's. There are justice issues between the sexes which need to be voiced and explored, for

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[48] Carol Gilligan: **In a Different Voice** (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1993), ch.6.

example in the assumption about women uprooting to be with men, and about women doing most of the actual work of moving. The double binds that women face around career and home-making also need to be voiced and explored. McCollum's research demonstrates the importance of finding out realistically what lies ahead, and the importance of planning for everyone's vocation in the new community. Women must know what they themselves need, as well as what the rest of the family needs, and must be responsible in making choices which address those needs.

We draw attention to the factors which do aid relocation: recognising losses; social support in grieving losses; an ability to maintain an uninterrupted sense of identity; opportunities for fulfilment after location; the resolution, or at least exploration, of justice issues and double binds. It is very important to note that choosing to relocate is no defence against the pain of loss; loss is loss, whatever the cause, and it needs to be grieved before an individual can reach out and love again.

IMPLICATIONS

There are a number of implications from our investigation so far. Our loves and attachments are profoundly important to who we are; when we are parted from them in relocation we feel pain. These losses need to

be recognized and grieved in order to move, enriched, into new circumstances. If they are not grieved, losses can lead to a reluctance to love again in the new place and to psychic disarray such as depression, anxiety, crisis, and PTSD.

People who through dependable parenting have confidence in their own worth and can turn to others for support are significantly more resilient in times of stress and relocation. We therefore have to stress the importance to our mobile society of being accessible and dependable parents to our infants.

We have begun an exploration of gender issues and relocation; it is not always more traumatic for women, but it is clear that relocation will be easier where there is enough social support and where there are opportunities for fulfilment.

In our next chapter we will look at what "home" means and why it is so important to those who are uprooting and homeless.

CHAPTER 2

THE MEANING OF "HOME"

"There was once a man with two sons...." With these words Jesus begins the parable of the most famous homecoming in the Bible. The parable of the prodigal son gives us some insight as to why "home" is a complex idea of enormous emotional power, especially for those who are uprooted. The longing for home of the displaced person is more than simply grief for that which is lost, more than just nostalgia for all that is familiar, although it may include both these sentiments. The "common experience, imagination and hope of all peoples", according to Elliott, is the "universal longing for security, order and a place to call home."[1]

In his article "The Homecomer", social theorist Alfred Schutz writes, "...home means one thing to the man (sic) who never has left it, another thing to the man who dwells far from it, and still another to him who returns."[2] The meaning of "home" changes, too, as our life situation changes. The prodigal son's home was, at first, his father's predictable place that he had to leave for pastures new. Later, lonely and starving in the far country, he remembered his home as a

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[1] John H. Elliott: **A Home for the Homeless** (London: SCM Press, 1982), p. 179.
[2] Alfred Schutz: **op. cit.,** p.108.

bountiful and provident place. Later still, home was the place that extended an unexpected welcome to him when he returned in penitence. "Home" was most vivid for him while he was somewhere else that was not home.

For the father, in contrast, home was the place where he belonged and where he was master. It was where he could provide safety, shelter and food from his farm for his family. It was the only place where he could wait and watch in hope for his son's return, and the place where he could ensure that the calf was fattened in readiness. It was also the place where he could solemnize his son's departure with the ritual presentation of the inheritance (a piece of inherited home!), and where he could celebrate his son's homecoming with a generous feast: through ritual and celebration he transformed his son's irregular departure from home and penitent reappearance into substantial life events for his son and for the others around him.

The elder brother, however, complained of home as a place of slavery. He had neither the boldness to leave it nor the generosity of spirit to celebrate his brother's return. While the prodigal and the father both put effort into restoring their relationship through repentance and forgiveness, the elder brother chose to be isolated from their community and enslaved by his own resentment, even as he was a willing slave in his own home.

In this chapter we will look at the idea of "home" so that we may have some understanding of how the lack of home or separation from home affects those who are homeless and uprooted. While affirming the importance of home, we also affirm that each of us has a vocation to fulfil, generally in the public sphere, so home and vocation have to be balanced: without the rhythms of home, vocation is diminished or impossible.

We will examine four different approaches, sometimes overlapping and intertwining, to the meaning of "home": first, as a unique and particular **place**; second, as a **metaphor** for the benign "Good Mother"; third, as a **source** of identity; and fourth, as a **quality** of relationship. These are some of the most significant ways of looking at "home"; but no claim is made that they are exhaustive.

A. OUR OWN PLACE WITH BOUNDARIES

One of the essential meanings of "home" is that it is a unique, particular and defined piece of territory[3] to which a person has a claim. This claim may or may not be legal ownership; more, it is that this particular place is imbued with strong emotional ties formed through having significant

[3] On the human need for 'turf', see Walter Brueggemann: **The Land** (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1977), p.2.

experiences there in the past. Exactly what home is depends on our location: in another country, home means our native country; in that country, home means our home town; in our home town, it means a particular house, usually our residence.

Our home is where others may find us, and we have a certain right to be there. When we are not at home, this particular place remains as a permanent affirmation of our existence, giving us "a local habitation and a name"[4]. Only by having a permanent home address may we participate fully in civic and political life: we may vote or be elected, pay taxes or receive benefits, open a bank account or request a loan, apply for a job, join the public library or get a passport in order to leave home forever. The homeless have no home address to receive their state benefits, no place that permanently affirms their existence as individuals and as citizens, and no place where they have the right to simply be, which is one of the factors which makes homelessness so soul-destroying.

The home place has boundaries, a fence or a wall. Hannah Arendt points out that

> "the fences inclosing private property and insuring the limitations of each household, the territorial boundaries which protect and make possible the physical identity of a people, and the laws which protect and make possible its political existence, are of such great importance

[4] William Shakespeare: **A Midsummer Night's Dream,** V.i.17.

> to the stability of human affairs precisely because no such limiting and protecting principles rise out of the activities going on in the realm of human affairs itself."[5]

Human behaviour is not only boundless, she continues; it is also inherently unpredictable. The homeless have no boundaries to limit their own unpredictable behaviour nor to protect them from the unlimited and unpredictable behaviour of other people. At the same time, the boundaries give place to the rights of the other. "Good fences make good neighbors,"[6] says the poet Robert Frost's neighbour, twice, as together they mend the wall that they keep between them.

The home shapes life inside. Houses with inner boundaries offer the residents respite from life together, or they make it possible to live in unengaged coexistence. Small homes may feel cosy or they may feel intolerably overcrowded. Rats, pigs and chickens become cannibalistic when overcrowded. Humans may feel a similar distress, though some of it is related to cultural expectations: people of the developed countries are accustomed to much more personal space at home than people in the developing countries.

Walls provide privacy. The Greeks thought that to have no private place of one's own, like a slave, meant to be no

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[5] Hannah Arendt: **The Human Condition** (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1959), p.191.
[6] Robert Frost: "Mending Wall" in **Selected Poems** (London: Penguin, 1973), p.43.

longer human. Arendt points out[7] that a life lived entirely in the public glare becomes shallow; to achieve depth it must "rise into sight" from some darker ground. A common complaint in our hospitals, prisons and other institutions, and of our homeless people, is the lack of the privacy essential to human dignity. Torture is obviously the most unbounded and outrageous invasion of privacy. Ironically, lack of privacy is also a common complaint of some of the most privileged members of our society: film stars, politicians and royalty.

Privacy has several functions: we feel that it is necessary for attending to biological functions, rest and personal cleanliness. Similarly, the tasks of repair, rearrangement, and restoration necessary for our public lives are carried out in privacy. Activities that are shameful or inappropriate in public need privacy; addictive behaviour and abuse flourish in private. Those who are homeless may have to endure the undignified exposure of any or all of their private activities.

In most cultures one of the basic gender issues is that men have been largely associated with public life, and women, largely, with private life. Ethicist Jean Bethke Elshtain[8] explains the division in this way: men have felt it necessary to create a rational, technological, manageable public world in order to escape from the emotional,

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[7] Arendt, **op. cit.,** p.71.

[8] Elshtain, Ellen Bethke: **Public Man, Private Woman: Women in Social and Political Thought** (Oxford: Robertson, 1981).

vulnerable, child-oriented world of women. In response to this, it is clear that society in most parts of the world is undergoing rapid social change for a number of reasons: more women now work in the public arena and fewer stay at home looking after fewer children; men's work is less secure so they are more likely to be at home; and more people are now working from offices in their homes. However, we should also note that resistance to change is equally remarkable: a recent National Opinion Poll found fifty four per cent of fathers spend less than five minutes alone with their children on weekdays, and twice as many fathers prefer sport to spending time with their children[9]. Both sexes are impoverished if whole realms of human experience are not available to them.

We consider public participation necessary for achieving anything great or permanent in this world; but that does not mean that what goes on in private is irrelevant, or expendable, or valid just for its instrumentality to our public participation. If privacy is seen negatively as simply a space for non-public, "back region" behaviour, it is easy to lapse into what sociologist Erving Goffman describes as an "associable mood of sullen, silent irritability".[10]

Privacy has a vital positive function, according to Arendt[11]: it shelters the intimate and the sacred. Privacy

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[9] National Opinion Poll, June 1995, quoted in **The Scotsman Magazine**, 15th June 1995.

[10] Erving Goffman: **The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life** (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1971), p.133.

[11] Arendt: **op. cit.**, p.38.

gives shelter to solitude, prayer, dreams, great love, deep pain, and the mysteries of birth and death. Jesus frequently sought privacy for solitary prayer, rest, or for time together with small groups of disciples and friends. Privacy is also the space where we delight in the charming and ordinary things that make life human and livable, much of it to do with family and friends. It is where children learn the rights and responsibilities of living in covenant relationship. Elshtain describes privacy positively as "a valid locus of human activity, moral reflection, social and historical relations, the creation of meaning, and the construction of identity having its own integrity."[12] Through "the trivial round, the common task"[13] we remember that, contrary to secular public opinion, life is gifted and holy. In the words of Dorothee Soelle, "We give thanks for the sun, bless the bread, wish one another a safe journey home, and remember that life is a gift, not a possession."[14]

Those who are relocating, uprooted and homeless may find that this private locus of activity is ignored, forgotten or difficult to create or maintain while more urgent things demand their time and energy. The lack of this private realm is not felt immediately; however, the deliberate, conscious, cherishing of "life together" in privacy is vital during disruption just because our sense of historical continuity, identity and narcissistic equilibrium is more fragile at that

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[12] Elshtain: **op. cit.**, p.322.
[13] from "New every morning", by John Keble, **Church Hymnary 3**, no. 47.
[14] Dorothee Soelle: **On Earth As In Heaven: A Liberation Spirituality of Sharing** (Louisville: Westminster/John Knox Press, 1993), p.87.

time. Honouring the private realm is also necessary for reassuring children of unconditional love when all about them is disrupted.

Another idea essential to the meaning of home as a unique and particular place is the sense of domestic intimacy and familiarity summed up in the expression "to feel at home". Schutz's 1944 description is a rather syrupy but succinct expression of affectionate home life. "Home", he writes, means

> "father-house and mother-tongue, the family, the sweetheart, the friends; it means a beloved landscape, 'songs my mother taught me', food prepared a particular way, familiar things for daily use, folkways, and personal habits - briefly, a peculiar way of life composed of small and important elements, likewise cherished."[15]

These are things which are probably not appreciated or even noticed much; but if unavailable, they may be sorely missed. Daily life at home generally feels safe through its own familiar routines; even deviations from the daily routine are dealt with in a way defined to deal with extraordinary situations. It is the very predictability of home life that sends young people like the prodigal son to far countries in search of grand adventure; and predictability has an ugly side in inflexibility and triviality. However, it is important to note that that same predictability, and the sense of belonging and competence that comes with familiarity, means that at

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[15] Schutz: **op. cit.**, p.108.

home we may replenish our emotional energy to carry out our vocation; we saw in chapter one how ineffectiveness and lack of control at home may deplete a person of all energy.

Schutz also points out[16] that the "system of knowledge" acquired informally at home is incoherent, inconsistent, and only partially clear; but it has sufficient coherence, clarity and consistency to give everyone from home confidence that they have a reasonable chance of being understood. Frequently, those who relocate suffer functional loss when they hover at the edge of a new group, frustrated by their initial inability to understand well or to be understood.

A sense of mastery and ownership is fundamental to possessing a home. An Aborigine from the Australian Western Desert expresses it this way: "My country is the place where I can cut a spear or make a spear-thrower without asking anyone."[17] Psychotherapist Audrey McCollum noted[18] that the women in her study claimed possession of a new home through a ritual of purging it that had the quality of an exorcism, even women who were not normally meticulous housewives. McCollum's strong language such as "ritual", "exorcism" and "purge" indicates a drive more deep-seated than merely responding to persuasive advertising. This pressing urge to claim and possess territory is evident in many cultures. Rich and poor, men as well as women, go

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[16] Schutz: **ibid.**, p. 95.
[17] quoted in Michael Jackson: **At Home in the World** (Durham: Duke University Press, 1995), p.102.
[18] McCollum, **op.cit.**, p.99.

through rituals of possession: ripping up the floors or carpets, rebuilding and repainting, gutting the cooking area, replacing the door or gate, changing the locks, fumigating the house, and digging up the ground. In the same way, Jesus used his whip of cords to cleanse the Temple and to throw the animal-dealers and money-changers out, purging the Temple with energy and vigour in order to reclaim it for his father (John 2:15).

Like the women in McCollum's study, residents of retirement homes, people who live with their in-laws, and people in their second marriages frequently complain of feeling invaded or constantly jarred if they have to live among other people's artefacts, or if they cannot exorcise the presences of previous owners. In houses which are not owned by the occupiers such as rented houses, tied houses and manses, there is often friction between the legal owner and the residents which revolves around their unacknowledged and conflicting claims to possession.

Having a home with walls gives us a safe place to keep our tools and other precious possessions. Simone Weil writes: "The soul feels isolated, lost, if it is not surrounded by objects which seem to it like an extension of the bodily members"[19] and she points out the human tendency to mentally appropriate anything, a house or a garden, that we have worked on over a long period. McCollum[20] writes that

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[19] Weil, **op. cit.**, p.33.
[20] McCollum, **op. cit.**, p.109.

our significant possessions, such as photographs and keepsakes, provide a "patina of continuity", reproducing the past for us by rekindling happy memories; they mirror our identity back to us and express it to others. She also notes that people in all cultures and historical periods have decorated their homes with beautiful artwork. A contributing factor to the "narcissistic disequilibrium" of movers may be the lack of a sense of continuity in their self-identity because their significant possessions may be inaccessible or in disarray. The very poor salvage anything that may be useful; for them the difference between survival and death may be a tattered blanket or a rusty bucket. If they are homeless too, they have to find a way to carry everything with them. Whether living at poverty level or not, the biblical mandate to exercise good stewardship of the earth's scarce resources means salvage, thrift, and ingenuity.

A home provides a place to store food or items for the future. This enables us to be hospitable and generous, and to imagine and make plans for the future. However, storing and clutching and grasping, for those who have more than enough, can be an unbounded obsession for its own sake; the message of Jesus was about careful stewardship, but not about building bigger barns. The ugly side of home's storehouse is its limitless capacity for consumerism. With a heavy heart the rich young ruler turned and went away from Jesus' loving invitation to follow him, "for he had great possessions" (Mark 10:22).

Another core meaning of the idea of home as a particular place with boundaries is to provide safety: shelter from the elements and a haven from the outside world. Psychologist Abraham Maslow[21] theorized that, after biological needs are satisfied, the most pressing human drive is the need to feel that we and our loved ones are safe. One of the reasons for the prodigal's father's rejoicing is that his son has returned to home and to **safety** (Luke 15:27). It is worth noting the subjectivity and variety of feelings of safety: people who live in earthquake zones may sleep soundly if they have good neighbours, while residents of lawless neighbourhoods may tolerate broken windows as long as they have a fierce dog. The homeless have no safe place **anywhere**; many prefer the streets over sleeping in hostels with people who are mentally disturbed; refugees, too, see danger all around them.

It is so important to feel that home is safe, that we react with disproportionate shock when its safety is violated, such as by a burglary. Physical and emotional violence and abuse hold more terror inside the home than outside it, because the place that **should** be the safest becomes the unsafest place, and the walls that should shut out the danger serve only to shut it in. Often, there is simply nobody and nowhere else to flee to for refuge. Having no place of safety anywhere means that hypervigilance slowly quenches the human spirit.

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[21] Abraham Maslow: **Motivation and Personality** (New York: Harper and Row, 1970, revised edition).

We need to feel safe; however, the desire for security can distort our vision. There is a parallel to be drawn between our human need for safety and the experience of the Israelites. Walter Brueggemann notes that when the children of Israel settled in Canaan, "guaranteed security dulls the memory".[22] Guaranteed security becomes idolatry; "transcendence becomes domesticated". The walls of our homes do have to be sturdy; but we on the inside have to be willing to open our doors. Walls imprison the housewife and those who are unemployed. We have to move on out to carry out our vocation; and we open up to invite others in. By offering asylum and hospitality to the fellow traveller and the stranger, we acknowledge that our blessings are bestowed on us by God, not for our own sake, but for our needier brother and sister. Sharing the Gospel is essentially an act of hospitality: the lonely stranger is invited into the fellowship, the hungry outcast is welcomed into the feast of the Kingdom of God.

In most traditional societies of Africa and the East, hospitality to strangers has been the custom, largely because the gracious host today may be the needy stranger tomorrow. However, hospitality is more than a custom. There is a repeated Biblical command about strangers and aliens: "You shall not wrong a stranger, or be hard upon him: for you were strangers in the land of Egypt" (Exodus 22:21); and the words of Jesus: "When I was a stranger you took me into your home...anything you did not do for one of these, however

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[22] Brueggemann: **op. cit.**, p.54.

humble, you did not do for me." (Matthew 25:35,45). The author of Hebrews, too, tells his readers: "Be not forgetful to entertain strangers: for thereby some have entertained angels unawares." (Hebrews13:2). Those without or between homes often regret their inability to invite others in over their threshold.

There are times when we find ourselves as the dislocated stranger. Missiologist Anthony Gittins points out[23] that the missionary or evangelist in other cultures is necessarily a stranger, and must humbly allow others to be the gracious host. Alastair Campbell[24] imagines pastoral care as simple companionship for the journey: companionship literally means "sharing bread", for in the words of the evangelist D.T.Niles, "the message of faith is no more than one starving person telling another where bread is to be found."

B. METAPHOR FOR THE GOOD MOTHER

We have seen that one core meaning of home is as a unique place with boundaries. A second core meaning of the idea of home is as a place that is safe, enfolding, the radiant hearth, the cosy Aga, the warm and welcoming heart, the

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[23] Anthony J. Gittins: **Gifts and Strangers** (Mahwah: Paulist Press, 1989), ch.5.
[24] Alastair V. Campbell: **op. cit.,** p.91.

"haven in a heartless world"[25]; meanings evocative of the "holding environment" described by Winnicott[26] to represent the benign maternal presence that fosters healthy integration in the infant. McCollum[27] notes that house or room, woman or womb are linked in dream, myth and symbol worldwide.

Here we have an idea of great emotional power because it evokes a state of being, more than a place or a person, when all the infant's earliest needs were completely satisfied and satisfiable. McCollum points out[28] that "home" can represent the internalized mother that adults carry within their minds throughout their lives. Perhaps the "longing for Eden" or "visions of Avalon" element in myths worldwide is rooted in dim memories of the idyllic infant-mother relationship. We have seen that Bowlby's attachment theory is based on this first relationship; when that first relationship is inadequate or disrupted, the damage done can disrupt coping mechanisms and future relationships.

The infant-mother relationship has great emotional power for a large number of women too: Midgley and Hughes[29] note that, in the sixties, Israeli women in *kibbutzim* started to demand the right to have their children at home with them at night, working Swedish women pressed for the right to

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[25] Christopher Lasch: **Haven in a Heartless World: The Family Beseiged** (New York: Basic Books, 1977).
[26] D.W. Winnicott: **The Maturational Process and the Facilitating Environment** (New York: International Universities Press, 1965).
[27] McCollum: **op. cit.**, p.97.
[28] McCollum: **ibid.**, p.97.
[29] Mary Midgley and Judith Hughes: **Women's Choices: Philosophical Problems Facing Feminism** (London: Weidenfeld and Nicholson, 1983), p.58 and p.94.

stay at home from work with their pre-school offspring, and Russian women, dissatisfied with a system of guaranteed work and creches which prevented them from making a home of their own for their families, had significantly fewer children, causing a worrying fall in the national birth rate.

Home as "the Good Mother" means not only warmth but also the physical well-being and sensory delight associated with satisfying one's biological needs: nourishment, rest, comfort, refreshment, cleanliness. The prodigal son, starving in the far country, longed for his provident home; exiles and refugees yearn for the particular tastes and smells of their home region. McCollum notes that the sense of smell is one of the most rudimentary senses, forming an early linkage between mother and baby.[30] Parents feel responsible for providing nourishment and warmth for their children; a source of acute distress to those who are dislocated or without land or work is their inability to feed their children or to keep them warm and comfortable.

Associated with well-being is the idea of home as a place where one can safely regress into a state of temporary childishness; where vulnerability, hesitancy, and hurt can be felt and "kissed better"; where we can "be ourselves" and express emotions and feelings; there is the ugly side, too, of self-indulgent moodiness. Home is where those who are "out of play" are cared for: the sick, the elderly, and the disabled; however, our society has fewer willing home carers than in

[30] McCollum: **op. cit.**, p.120.

former years. Brueggemann points out our human need for a place "to which recourse is made for purposes of orientation, assurance and empowerment"[31].

The hurting child of whatever age can be comforted where there is trust in unconditional love. Robert Frost expresses this love in "The Death of the Hired Man":

"Home is the place where, when you have to go there,
They have to take you in."
"I should have called it
Something you somehow haven't to deserve."[32]

Another feature of home as the Good Mother is McCollum's point[33] that knowing that the "home-mother" is there makes absence feel safe. Teenagers and young adults leave it easily assuming it will be there unchanged and welcoming when they return. There is a profound difference between leaving home and losing home: losing one's home can mean losing the sense of sheltering warmth that it embodies, and it can mean re-experiencing, consciously or unconsciously, the pain and danger of separating from the actual mother of long ago.

Some gender issues need to be raised here. Chodorow[34] observes that women in all cultures have been responsible for child-rearing, so they have been identified with the

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[31] Brueggemann: **op. cit.**, p.5.
[32] Robert Frost: "Death of the Hired Man" in **op. cit.**, p.48.
[33] McCollum: **op. cit.**, p.97.
[34] Nancy Chodorow: **The Reproduction of Mothering: Psychoanlysis and the Sociology of Gender** (Berkeley: University of Calfornia Press, 1978).

home-mother and its responsibilities, tasks which they may have often undertaken gladly and lovingly, as we have seen above. However, balancing or juggling their vocational and home-maker responsibilities is difficult, and few men pull their weight with home responsibilities. Like all people, mothers sometimes need to be cared for by others, they need to be assured, empowered, and kissed better; yet few husbands and partners put effort into showing them that care.

It is important to note Gilligan's[35] observation that women are less able to care for a child or themselves in the absence of care from others; and that women tend to lack an ethic of self-care. Chodorow[36] notes that in some stable ethnic communities, women care for each other. However, in our own mobile society women have to care for themselves; or it does not get done. Since those first mother-child relationships are so important, our society needs to extend much care to women and to the infants that they care for, and to encourage an ethic of self-care.

The "home-mother" means different things to males and females. Hudson and Jacot[37] observe that the "dis-identification" or separation that infant males must undergo in order to differentiate themselves from their mother leaves them with what they refer to as "the male wound". The wound has costs: males have more difficulty in dealing

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[35] Gilligan: **op. cit.,** p.125.
[36] Chodorow: **op. cit.,** p.36.
[37] Liam Hudson and Bernadine Jacot: **The Way Men Think: Intellect, Intimacy and the Erotic Imagination** (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1991), chapter 2.

with complicated emotions, and they have a tendency to misogyny expressed through both an idealization of females and a fear of being engulfed by them. The wound has benefits too: as an inexhaustible source of energy it provides men with a sense of their own agency and freedom to act on the world; and it sustains a passion for creating systems of ideas to replace the lost intimacy.

According to Hudson and Jacot, females do not experience this same wound, because they remain in connection as they continue to identify with their mothers. Their sense of self has to do with abiding and with maintaining relationships rather than with separating themselves from them. They do not tend to be driven with the same urgency to separate themselves from the untidy intimacy of home. Thus, "home" tends to seem threatening to males and they must be able to sever the bond in order to be fully themselves. Females may be threatened by "home" in the opposite way, however, by not differentiating themselves enough. The result may be that leaving home seems like a ripping off of parts of themselves.

Parks[38] observes that humans manifest two great yearnings: for autonomy and agency, and for belonging and communion. She points out that men tend to tell their stories in terms that celebrate moments of separation and

[38] Sharon Daloz Parks: "Home and Pilgrimage: Companion Metaphors for Personal and Social Transformation" **Soundings** 72, 1989, p.300.

differentiation; women tend to tell their stories in terms that celebrate moments of attachment and relation.

She notes that the metaphor of "journey" is our favourite metaphor. It underlies developmental psychology and the language of spirituality (for example: the "pilgrimage" and the "inner journey"), and the journey metaphor is also strongly linked with the triumph of conquest; for example, John Bunyan's *Pilgrim's Progress* and the heroic myths such as *Gilgamesh* and the *Odyssey.* However, she continues, the journey metaphor has significant limitations. As Carol Ochs points out, "To focus on a time past or a time to come is to miss the only time in which we can act."[39] Henri Nouwen expresses a similar concern: "The urge to get up and go is...a temptation to look elsewhere for what is really close at hand."[40]

Parks observes that the primacy of the journey metaphor is gender-specific to some extent. Many women resist it, finding it incomplete without a companion metaphor of abiding and connection. Until the Enlightenment, the images of pilgrimage and home were profoundly linked: the Exodus journey, for example, always had the promised land as its destination. However, Parks notes that the pilgrimage/journey metaphor has now been separated from its companion metaphor, that of dwelling/homesteading, and

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[39] Carol Ochs: **Women and Spirituality** (Totowa, NJ: Rowman & Allanheld, 1983), p.150.

[40] Henri Nouwen: **With Open Hands** (Notre Dame, Indiana: Ave Maria Press, 1975), p.44.

dominates it. The "journey'" is now made at the expense of "home". We need, she says, to recover the metaphor of "home" as a companion to "journey"; not with its ugly side of consumerism, oppressive domestication and privatization, but with its attributes of nourishing space, abiding, and connection.

> "We have learned much about the transforming power of pilgrimage. We need also to recover the transforming power of the art of home-making. The soul's discipline is shaped both by venturing and by abiding."[41]

There is the issue of biological needs. What human beings have in common, more than any doctrine, is that everybody, everywhere, has biological needs. However, Miller[42] points out that providing for the bodily needs of others is seen as not doing anything, it is seen as "outside the main action". This is because it is seen as private, not public work; servile, not independent work; dirty and unpleasant, not clean and pleasant work; trivial and repetitive work, not significant work; women's, not men's work. The devaluation of this work is mistaken: if we do not attend to our biological needs we will die. Most of the world spend most of their lives trying to stay alive, scraping together enough to eat and feed their families, and fetching water, and battling with illness. One of the strengths of

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[41] Parks: **op. cit.,** p.312, quoting Richard R. Niebuhr: "Pilgrims and Pioneers", **Parabola** 9: 6-13.

[42] J.B.Miller: **Towards A New Psychology of Women** (Boston: Beacon Press, 1976), p.53.

liberation theology in Latin America is its focus for ministry on the daily necessities of the poorest of the poor.

We are commanded to care for the stranger and the needy brother and sister (Matthew 25); that is the essence of Christian service and of the Gospel. The very humanity of Jesus is affirmed for us not so much because of his great teaching, but because he was born in the usual badly-timed way, and because he felt hungry and thirsty and tired and downcast, just like us. Jesus sought rest at Bethany, and he invited his heavy-laden followers to rest in him. He ate and drank, and he provided food and water for the hungry and thirsty. He empowered those who were "out of play". He healed in terms of cleanliness, and in love he washed the dirty feet of his disciples. Jesus' public carrying out of the degraded tasks of caring for others elevated those tasks to a human dignity beyond male contempt or female martyrdom. Perhaps one sign of his divinity lay in his unconditional lovingkindness, without a trace of the ambivalence which tarnishes most of our human loves.

C. THE PLACE WE ARE FROM

We have seen that home may be a particular place, and it may be a metaphor for the benign "Good Mother". A third core meaning of the idea of home is that it is the source of our identity, our roots, "where we are from". We are born into a

family, a tribe, a town, a nation, a culture, a language, even an accent, which we did not choose; everybody born into that culture would have something in common just from being born into it. Its historical existence before our birth gives it, for us, an aura of permanence. Normally, we are accepted there, just because we were born there to parents already known; normally, we have our first sense of belonging in that place. Normally, we feel recognized there, and we recognize the others around us. Normally, people there know our name, and we probably know theirs. Normally, it is where we learn our first set of meanings about life.

In earlier times this "place where we are from" would have been known as our roots; there might have been a particular family house, our extended family close by, land intimately known and carefully tended by generations of family members, well-known neighbours, memories and stories linked to that place, our own pew in a nearby place of worship, a cemetery, and so on, all of which would have given the inhabitants a literal rootedness. When the Highlanders had to uproot and move to other continents during the Clearances, they took a handful of black earth from home in a pouch with them, and their first action was to scatter it around their new croft.[43] Present day rural societies still have a profound and essential sense of rootedness, and an appreciation of the providence and limits of the land. However, urbanization and mobility are making that kind of

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[43] Judith O'Neill: **So Far from Skye** (London: Puffin Books, 1993), p.10 and p.169.

historic landed existence much less common. "Where we are from" tends now to revolve around human groups more than around the land.

This loss of rootedness has far-reaching effects. One of the consequences of rootlessness is ecological disaster: it allows the irresponsible abuse of community and fragile ecological resources for one's own advantage; if a place is corrupted and consumed, it is easy to assume that we can move on to colonize somewhere else. Another effect is destructiveness: Fromm[44] claims that we continue to seek the sense of absolute security which is lost at birth. It can be replaced by symbolic mother substitutes such as soil or the nation; or the individual can find new roots through the "brotherhood of man". Fromm points out that our sanity depends on finding new ties, because without strong affective ties to the world we suffer from utter desolation. However, if we find neither love nor symbiosis, says Fromm, the result may be malignant aggression, the craving to destroy others. "By destroying the world, I am saved from being crushed by it."[45]

According to Maslow[46] the human need to belong is a drive only slightly less imperative than the drives of hunger, thirst, sex and safety, and is a source of strong emotional attachment. Social groups are a source of support and solidarity to their members, and in exchange they expect

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[44] Fromm: **op. cit.**, p.232.
[45] Fromm: **ibid.**, p.233.
[46] Maslow: **op. cit.**

loyalty. Being disloyal through criticism or rejection of the values of the group, or even moving away, may well engender a sense of betrayal and anger.

Missiologist Anthony J. Gittins points out[47] that people-in-groups transmit a sense of group-identity through the sharing of a common past and a common effort. There are formal ways of firming the community, such as rituals and celebrations; and there are informal ways of defining the boundaries of the social group: stories, jokes, popular music and gossip inform the community as they form the individual and communal memory. In these ways we learn what Charles Taylor[48] calls the "horizons of significance" of moral questions, the background of "things that matter". In these ways habits, values, attitudes and memories, fundamental to our identity, are absorbed. People who relocate must loosen the ties with the group in order to settle into the next place.

Memory is the stuff of "who we are". This is demonstrated when a person suffers brain damage, and the consequent loss of memory drastically changes "who they are". Perhaps by means of formal teaching or perhaps through informal gossip the prodigal son knew that, where he was from, squandering his inheritance was a sin not only against his father but also against God; in the same way he probably knew what was, or was not, behaviour fit for a son.

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[47] Gittins: **op. cit.,** p.72.
[48] Charles Taylor: **The Ethics of Authenticity** (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1992), p.33.

Christians have their source of identity through roots or social groups too; we also have another source of identity. Through baptism we are named and claimed by God, and we enter into the church and God's covenant of forgiveness. Through water and the Holy Spirit our status is altered. Through baptism we have heard God call each of us by our own name. To the question, Where are we from? the answer lies not so much in **who** we are as in **whose** we are.

Baptism is God's claim on us and God's promise to us. As an event it is complete in itself; yet we spend the rest of our lives living out our baptism within the believing community, the church. At Sunday worship we return to listen again and again to the promises of our baptism and of the community. We participate with other Christians in the work of the church, and we rehearse our daily life outside the church. Together we share praise, prayer, confession and the ministry of the word. Ramshaw observes that in worship

> "ritual can shape our attitudes after the pattern of Christ. It does this not by imputing feelings to us which we do not feel, but by engaging us in actions we might not spontaneously perform."[49]

By the action of giving thanks we may learn to be thankful. By the action of confession we may become more aware of our shortcomings. So by regular attendance, our identity as Christians is gradually formed over a lifetime.

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[49] Elaine Ramshaw: **Ritual and Pastoral Care** (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1987), p.28.

As our identity is continually being formed, so our lives outside Sunday worship should reflect more closely our identification with Jesus Christ.

Our identities are also shaped by our participation in the sacrament of the Lord's Supper. The Body of Christ is the bread that we share, and it is also the people that we share it with, people that we did not choose and who are as sinful as ourselves. We remember that this is not just a thanksgiving meal: it was the last supper on the way to the cross. The Eucharist is a sign of God's nurturing grace and a sign of our need to habitually encounter the presence of God, so that we may be formed into the body that we are meant to be. It is a meal of remembrance, in the sense of "remember who you are". In Willimon's words: "We remember, so that the body of Christ might be continually re-membered."[50]

Most people leave their birth home, the place where they are from, voluntarily or involuntarily. Some people should leave home and do not. Dee Dee Glass writes[51] that women who grew up in abusive households and married abusive men tend to leave home and return to it repeatedly, believing the promises and threats of their abusive partners. They feel unrealistically responsible for "making home work", and if it does not work, they try even harder. They have to practise

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[50] William Willimon: **The Service of God: How Worship and Ethics are Related** (Nashville: Abingdon, 1983), p.129.
[51] Dee Dee Glass: **All My Fault: Why Women Don't Leave Abusive Men** (London: Virago, 1995).

leaving home, going a little farther each time, until they can finally manage independence.

Looking for a moment at the prodigal son as "he came to his senses" in the far country, we note how wonderfully starvation and loneliness concentrate the mind. The home he had left so conclusively suddenly seemed strangely sweet: it was where there was plenty to eat and it was where he had been part of the family. In his homesickness the prodigal overlooked the fact that the dull productivity of his home was the very thing that had compelled him to leave it. One of the commonly known effects of homesickness and nostalgia is to oversimplify and therefore to distort the qualities of the distant beloved. Through the workings of our imagination "home" has more emotional pulling power when we are far away from it than when we are there.

The power of imagination merits a closer examination. Benedict Anderson defines the nation, our home in one sense, as an "imagined political community, inherently limited and sovereign".[52] (He uses the word 'imagine' in the sense of "create", not "falsify".) He notes that, regardless of actual inequality and exploitation, the nation is always conceived as a deep, horizontal comradeship. He theorizes that, ultimately, it is this imagined fraternity that makes it possible for so many millions of people, not to kill, but to die for the nation.

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[52] Benedict Anderson: **Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism** (London: Verso, 1991), p.6.

A nation is imagined when its members will never know or meet most of their fellow members, yet in the minds of each lives the image of their communion, says Anderson[53]. Members of these imagined communities typically believe that the cause of their nation is worthy and, therefore, it has the right, even the duty, to demand sacrifice from them; it is a belief of considerable emotional power.

His description may be expanded to include other imagined communities to which we belong, and which feel like "home". For example, missionaries in tropical countries traditionally take their weekly anti-malarial medication with their Sunday lunch, and imagine the community of other missionaries doing likewise. Greenpeace supporters imagine people like themselves, whom they will never know, picketing Shell stations. Animal rights and anti-abortion protesters imagine themselves part of a wider network of people making the same risky protests. Expatriates and exiles imagine themselves part of a larger community of exiles from that country, especially on patriotic days when they share their national liquor. Language and ritual also have considerable power to connect us affectively with the dead and to suggest contemporaneous community: national anthems are the obvious example, but we could also cite the Book of Common Prayer, the Lord's Prayer, the Latin Mass, the Jewish Passover, and "Flower of Scotland".

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[53] Anderson: **ibid.**, p.6.

A crucial source of emotional power, says Anderson, is that "all profound changes of consciousness, by their very nature, bring with them characteristic amnesias."[54] As an example he points out that after the changes of puberty we cannot "remember" the consciousness of childhood. If it is impossible to "remember" our previous identity, we need it to be narrated to us.

The church works like an imagined community, in a sense, although we believe that it is the work of God and not simply our own. There is the "characteristic amnesia" or profound change of consciousness of conversion or deep religious experience. We have that narrated to us in language such as "I once was lost but now am found". We imagine ourselves as part of the worldwide fellowship of believers; we imagine ourselves as the Body of Christ; we imagine ourselves with the communion of saints. It works like an imagined community in another sense: the feeling of being part of a worldwide, historic fellowship, the identification with biblical heroes and saints, the belief that this is the only way to salvation, and commands such as "Go forth and make disciples!" combine in the conviction that the church has the right, even the duty, to require sacrifice from her members. Conversely, if she does not require of them their utmost, her members may find themselves curiously disappointed.

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[54] Anderson: **ibid.**, p.204.

How does a new place or social group become "home", "where we are from"? Charles Taylor[55] points out the fundamentally dialogical character of human life: we become full human agents, capable of understanding ourselves and hence of defining an identity, through exchanges with others who matter to us: our "significant others". This is borne out by the people who settle down well after a relocation; they point to feelings of acceptance, belonging, being recognized and recognizing others, being called by name, feeling effective and valued, being part of a network, and sharing meanings and values with others in the new community who have become significant for them. Those who remain unsettled usually cite, as a major reason, a lack of those same feelings; in other words, a non-affirmation of their identity, and a sense of homelessness.

D. A QUALITY OF RELATIONSHIP

The fourth core meaning of home to be examined is the idea of "good relationship" or "life together". "Good relationship" may be the most elusive and unarticulated of our ideas of home: people who have some or all of the other elements of home may still yearn for something more. It often happens that through some exceptional circumstance such as an accident, people gather around in support, and we realize that we have already been building life together. This

[55] Taylor: **op. cit.**, p.33.

is, ironically, a common discovery at a farewell party or a funeral. Those who are uprooted may not be able to fulfil their longing for a place to call home in a specific location; however, good relationship or life together is possible, wherever we are. Life together is what we are called to: we are called and commanded to live in love (John15:12).

Keeling writes that love changes the nature of the soul.

> "The Christian doctrine of 'atonement' is precisely about this process of being changed by love. It says, simply and practically, that this is what the world is for, that we may learn to be changed by love. Atonement means learning about love by doing it - and accepting that sometimes the doing will be painful."[56]

We may be hurt, we may be the source of others' pain: yet "what the 'sacrifice' of Jesus promises is that out of pain there will come new life."[57]

The commonest relationships of home are, naturally, in the family; but increasing numbers of people look for a quality of relationship which is distinctively familial in other places. These other homes may be churches, clubs and societies, regiments, cults, intentional communities and other groups. We will start, then, by considering what is distinctive and positive about familial relationships. Secondly, Brueggemann writes: "I believe that the biblical

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[56] Michael Keeling: **The Mandate of Heaven: The Divine Command and the Natural Order** (Edinburgh: T.& T. Clark, 1995), p.11.
[57] Keeling: **ibid.**, p.12.

text provides a beginning point in envisioning a human future which, if it is to matter at all, must be historical, covenantal and promissory...."[58]. Borrowing his categories, we will move on to examine the idea that the relationships that show qualities of being historical, covenantal and promissory, as well as familial, have the quality of relationship that we would call home.

Of the qualities distinctive to good familial relationships, we will restrict our examination to three. One of the essential qualities is that they are transgenerational: the old and the young are valued, so provision is made for them.

> "Once again shall old men and old women sit in the streets of Jerusalem, each leaning on a stick because of their great age; and the streets of the city shall be full of boys and girls, playing in the streets." (Zechariah 8:4-5).

In Japan, older parents are honoured and needed: Maxwell and Silverman[59] found that they are therefore more active in family business, community affairs and childrearing than their western counterparts. In contrast, Elshtain[60] points out the crisis for western society of so many broken homes: after divorce, grandchildren often live far from grandparents, and they tend to think of older people as unattractive and do not want to imagine themselves as older. In good trans-

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[58] Brueggemann: **op. cit.,** p.xvii.
[59] R.J. Maxwell and P.Silverman: "Information and Esteem" in J.Hendricks (ed.): **In the Country of the Old** (Farmingdale, NJ: Baywood, 1980).
[60] Jean Bethke Elshtain in **National Forum,** Phi Kappa Phi Journal, Winter 1995.

generational communities, younger people benefit from the wisdom, experience and sponsorship of older people, and the older people are cared for and valued by the younger ones. Relocation has always been a source of anguish for our elders: if they are left behind, they lose their families; if they relocate too, they may never adapt to the new place.

A second distinctive feature of good familial relationships is their acknowledged responsibility to protect and care for each other. They must care for those who are "out of play": churches have pastoral responsibilities to the homebound and hospitalized, regiments have responsibilities to their retired and battle-scarred soldiers. They must care for those who are temporarily incapacitated: an intentional community rallies around a member who suffers bad news, a regiment supports the families of hostages, an extended family helps look after latchkey children.

They must also care for their young. Children need to be reared in a situation of trust, intimacy and security; they need time with parents, and they need time away from parents but with their activities monitored. There are strong arguments in favour of Elshtain's point[61] that children need two permanent figures in the home for healthy growth. A practical argument is that one of the adults may fall ill and be unable to look after the children. Also, child-rearing is an ethical task, and a single working parent often does not have the time or energy to do it consistently and well. The

[61] Elshtain: **op. cit.**

importance of creating and maintaining the sacred space is again emphasized. In this regard we repeat Bowlby's theory about the importance of dependable parents for the sake of the children.

A third distinctive idea of familial relationships is the idea of sisterhood and brotherhood. Fraternity is an abstract ideal, but in brotherly and sisterly relationships we matter to each other as unique individuals. Our relationships are tried and tested; each of us is an element in the autobiographies of the others. If we are not there, we are missed; our absence is as significant as our presence, and when we return, we are welcomed. Familial relationships are not simply passive; they have to be lived out actively. The prodigal son and his father both "did right by each other" at the end of the parable; we might say that they were a father and son *par excellence*. In contrast, by refusing to celebrate and by referring to "this son of yours", the elder brother refused to be a brother to his brother; also, with his sulky response to his father's pleading, he refused to be a son to his father.

The idea of sisterhood and brotherhood embodies equality, support, mutual respect and responsibility, and belonging to the same community. Brotherhood and sisterhood were one of the distinctive features of early Christianity: Elliott notes that in I Peter:

> "the strangers, the rootless, the homeless of any age can take comfort: in the community of the

> faithful the stranger is no longer an isolated alien but a brother or sister. For the *paroikoi* of society there is a possibility of life and communion in the *oikostou theou,* a home for the homeless."[62]

The good relationships which add up to home are historical because they are based in fact, not imagination, and they exist over the course of time. "Home" has a sense of continuity in time: not only does it continue to exist when we leave it, but it seems to us to have always existed. Historical relationships are affirmed through celebrations and rituals, customs and institutions which make provision for the learning of roles, the formation of attitudes, the firming of identity and the reinforcement of social bonding. We participate in, or witness, events and rituals observed in certain ways: announcements, celebrations, homecomings, holidays, graduations, marriages, deaths, birthdays, Christmas, the newly arrived baby, the prodigal's inheritance. Walzer[63] notes that at moments of crisis, ritual affirmations may be moral acts; their purpose is to sustain personal and moral obligation. The division of the prodigal's inheritance was, among other things, a moral act in crisis to sustain the moral obligation of father and son.

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[62] Elliott: **op. cit.,** p.288.

[63] Michael Walzer: **Exodus and Revolution** (New York: Basic Books, 1985), p.88.

Ramshaw[64] points out that ritualization helps us constructively to handle our natural but potentially destructive ambivalence. It does this in two ways: by reinforcement and possible exaggeration of the preferred emotion (the father's embrace), and by contained expression of the unwanted, conflicting emotion (the father's declaration that his son had been dead and had come back to life). With the decline of formality in our developed societies, we have unfortunately lost this healthful use of ritual: it is common knowledge that Christmas dinner, once the principal ritual of extended family conviviality, is now a source of great stress, spiralling bad behaviour and even the rising divorce rate.

The maintenance of a sense of historical identity is something that has to be actively valued and worked at by those who are uprooted; if rituals and celebrations are not observed, and if common memories are not preserved, shared and affirmed, individuals and families lose their sense of past existence as the firm ground from which their present existence rises up. It is worth noting that, through repetition, shared ritual and memory have the capacity to make the past seem firmer than it might have seemed at the time.

One of the features of "life together" is the sense of covenant, the sense of mutual commitment which does not keep score but is committed to the good of the relationship

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[64] Ramshaw: **op. cit.**, p.31.

and the good of the other. "Home" is where promises have been made and kept, forgiveness asked for and received, wounds healed, hope kindled, crises weathered, and love expressed. There is also the sense that home is a good place, the right place, for these covenantal actions; in fact, where they may be expected to happen because of the nature of the relationship. Such relationships have room for all that makes us fully human.

Good relationship requires effort, commitment and intentionality from all those involved. Covenant relationships may be an exception to the need for humans to respect boundaries: they represent a potential for movement, for reaching out across the boundaries of self-interest. The son returned, but he might not have made it all the way over the threshhold if his father had not run to meet him. One of the outstanding features of the parable is that both son and father reached out and put forth effort into their reconciliation. This effort was encouraged, but not guaranteed, by their lifelong relationship, and encouraged, but not guaranteed, by the father's gracious handing over of the inheritance.

"Life together" is not coerced, but it is not undisciplined either. In our developed western society the values of individualism and consumerism have encouraged people to think that all constraints are enslaving; Bauman notes that "modernity declared all constraints illegitimate and

therefore offensive"[65]. However, he continues, only "being for others", feeling responsible for others, and even a willingness to die for others stands between us and "the absurd emptiness of contingent existence".[66] Living in covenant is free of coercion, but it has bonds of obligation, discipline and responsibility which we assume freely as our part of the covenant.

Good relationship has a promissory quality which is related to its covenantal quality. The relationship can be imagined continuing into the future. One way, in the family, is through children; for other groups new members or converts are essential. Our willingness to become committing persons is a way of keeping faith with God, because God keeps promises. The capacity to make and to keep commitments is central to our ethical life as Christians. Accepting our responsibility for the future is a choice that is not always easy but we do it. Arendt points out that promise[67] has a stabilizing power which partially dispels the unpredictability of action and the unreliability of humans.

For those who are uprooted, covenantal "life together" is possible but it requires much effort. It means valuing both the other, and valuing the nature of covenant. This means being able to create and maintain together the private realm,

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[65] Zygmunt Bauman: **Mortality, Immortality and Other Life Strategies** (Cambridge, Polity Press, 1992), p.161.
[66] Bauman: **ibid.**, p.40.
[67] Arendt: **op. cit.**, p.243-4.

which, we saw, tends to be ignored in times of upheaval. However, if "life together" comes through, it lends hope, identity and dignity to the individual and energy to the upheaval. Those who are uprooted may find that their sense of disequilibrium diminishes their confidence in making and keeping promises; however, it is important to emphasize that it is the very act of making and keeping commitments that stabilizes the unpredictable future.

Many of the biblical images of uprooting and exile are at the same time images of faith-filled response to call to covenant relationship with God. Yahweh's first words to Abram were, "Leave your own country..." (Genesis 12:1). The last words of Jesus to his disciples were, "Go forth, therefore..." (Matthew 28:19), not surprising words from a man who said of himself: "Foxes have holes, and birds of the air have nests; but the Son of Man has nowhere to lay his head." (Matthew 8:5). An important self-image for the early Christians was *parepidemos* (Hebrews 11:13 and 1 Peter 2:11), translated as "aliens" or "exiles". Similarly, the idea expressed in Hebrews 13:14 that "Here we have no abiding city", implies that followers of Jesus are strangers in a strange land until we reach "the city which is to come".

If Jesus called his followers to leave home and safety to follow him, we may ask if we are called to be homeless too. The call of Jesus to Peter, Andrew, James and John to leave their homes and fishing nets must have been compelling, because they responded without hesitation. He also called

his listeners to leave safety and to give up everything to follow him (Matthew 16:25; 19:21) However, Jesus did not command everyone to leave home, even as there were many people who were not healed by him. Some he sent home after being healed (Matthew 9:6; Mark 8:26); others he sent home, but they followed him instead (Mark 10:52); and we have already noted that there were others, such as the rich young ruler, who turned his invitation down. Mary, Martha and Lazarus did not, as far as we know, leave home and follow him; instead, they provided the hospitality, rest and friendship that Jesus needed. Their discipleship was not seen as defective or uncommitted because of that.

The followers of Jesus could only leave home in the knowledge that there were others, equally faithful, who stayed at home to sow and reap, build and repair, raise the children, care for the sick and the old, and show hospitality to the stranger. Christian tradition values willingness to leave home in response to divine call; it equally values love, commitment, community, hospitality, the care of the generations and stewardship of the earth which together are an expression of rootedness and homesteading. Some are called for the sake of the gospel to leave home; and those who have homes are called to open them generously for those who are in need.

IMPLICATIONS

"We had to celebrate and rejoice, because this brother of yours was dead and has come to life; he was lost and has been found." We have looked at the parable of the Prodigal Son in different ways in order to see why "home" is an idea of such enormous emotional power: as a geographical place with boundaries, as a metaphor for the Good Mother, as a source of identity and as a sense of right relationship. We have also looked at ways in which the lack of home affects those who are uprooted. The idea of "right relationship" is suffused with the idea of our own responsibility and effort in keeping the covenant, being the brother or sister, being the hospitable host to the stranger. We have also suggested that some of the great figures of the Bible were willing to be homeless in the geographical sense because they were called to covenant relationship with God, a "home" which was much more compelling.

CHAPTER 3

SOME BIBLICAL AND THEOLOGICAL IMAGES

OF UPROOTING, JOURNEYING AND HOMELESSNESS

One of our human characteristics is that we compose, and we are composed by, meaning. Robert Kegan[1] and James Fowler[2] have described the development of personality as a basic process of meaning-making. Fowler maintains that our understanding of ultimate reality is at stake in the process of meaning-making; it underlies our apprehension of ourselves, the human community and the holy.

When life is smooth the meanings that we have made usually hold good. However, we saw in chapter one that in times of crisis we experience cognitive dissonance; the old meanings are unable to make sense of the new situation. In the apparent chaos we look for deeper meanings which would enable us to be more firmly grounded, meanings that would embrace both the crisis and our faith. If we do not find adequate meaning, we may succumb to depression, despair or overwhelming anxiety.

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[1]Robert Kegan:**The Evolving Self: Problem and Process in Human Development** (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1982).

[2] James W. Fowler: **Stages of Faith: Human Development and the Quest for Meaning** (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1981).

Paradigms, images, symbols, and stories are powerful ways of enriching our meaning-making. They add substance and complexity to the banality of our weary thoughts; they enlarge our capacity to think about the mysteries at work in human life. Biblical images have power as paradigm and as the word of God where intellectual reasoning and psychological accounts do not. As we turn to biblical accounts of homelessness, it is not in order to find out what we should do next; there are clearly too many differences between those times and ours. Nor do we read in these accounts a description of "what really happened". What we can see is how Israel reflected afterwards, in faith, on the disruptive events which had befallen them. The biblical accounts may deepen our capacity for living faithfully in unimaginable and contradictory circumstances. In these accounts we see others, like ourselves, of uncertain faith and intermittent courage, looking for meaning or struggling with difficult explanations during times of upheaval. We see that others have been there before us in dark and dreadful places, and some have emerged on the other side, transformed.

But not without scar tissue. We see that the guarantees that they wanted from God in their uprootedness - land, provision, predictability, assurance - is not what God provided for them. All that God provided was God's own presence. We see that comfort and inspiration came from unexpected sources and unexpected people. We see that God did not assure them of continuity, but God did work new things out of discontinuity. We see how hope is awakened and held on to, or

not, in hopeless circumstances, and that God is there in the hopefulness that the future holds out. We will see that even those who are fearful can be willing to march on, work hard or even just to "keep on keeping on".

Some of the ideas of chapter two will reappear here: in particular, the idea that ultimately "covenant relationship" or "life together" is a yearning more profound than belonging or familiarity. In the end we will see that home is not so much a source of refuge or nourishment or belonging, but the place where we take up responsibility and commitment.

This chapter, then, is an examination of some of the issues of uprooting and homelessness that are to be found in the Bible. The Exodus is the paradigmic account of leaving oppression behind, and marching together with God to the promised land. The wilderness is a state that many people identify with when their hopes are dashed, and they find themselves abandoned, without life support, and without hope. The exile is another situation of dislocation and contradiction. The story of Ruth is an account of an unexpected resolution to the dilemma of a poor widowed alien.

A. THE EXODUS

The Exodus account has been an archetypal story of uprooting and leaving and a paradigm for God's liberating

actions, in the Bible and throughout history including the present day. For example, Second Isaiah used memories of the Exodus as a vivid image to rekindle hope in the despairing Babylonian exiles. "Thus says the Lord, who opened a way in the sea and a path through mighty waters....Here and now I will do a new thing." (Isaiah 43:16-21) In our own time, Walzer observes that

> "the escape from bondage, the wilderness journey, the Sinai covenant, the promised land: all these loom large in the literature of revolution...many men and women, believing in God's mighty hand, have nevertheless girded their loins, challenged the pharaohs of their own time, marched into the wilderness - and understood what they were doing by reading Exodus."[3]

We will look now at some Exodus images to see how they speak to those who are uprooting in our own day.

Though the Israelites had lived in Egypt for a long time, they were an exiled race; they were never "from" Egypt. The promised land, unknown as it was, would be their homeland, the place where they would belong. It was not just a provident land of milk and honey; it would assure safety for the children of the Israelites, there would be dignified work on their own land, and freedom from the oppression of slavery. These might be what we have described as the "Good Mother" elements of the promised land. The promise of being a holy nation, living in covenant with Yahweh, chosen and protected by Yahweh, meant a life lived in "right relationship".

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[3] Michael Walzer, **op.cit.**, p.10.

However, leaving Egyptian slavery was surprisingly difficult; leaving, even leaving an intolerable situation, usually is. The Israelites were frightened slaves. Walzer explains that they were psychologically incapable of standing up to the Egyptians; "they had admitted into their souls the degradation of slavery"[4]. It was similar to Stanley Elkins' description[5] of slavery in the U.S. south. Paulo Freire[6] observes that the oppressed internalize the oppressors - and consequently their own situation as oppressed people - in such a way that they can no longer imagine or hope for any other possibility nor liberating change.

Walzer[7] describes the Israelites' labour for the Egyptians as *corvee*: it was endless, purposeless work that exhausted and humiliated them. Where good work gives the worker dignity and enables humans to participate in creation, this work was designed to humiliate and exterminate them. In our own day, we find people who are physically capable of leaving oppressive situations but psychologically incapable of doing so; they have internalized such a degraded mentality that they can neither imagine anything better, nor believe that they deserve anything better. In Latin America and Asia, for example, liberation theologians[8] draw parallels between the

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[4] Walzer, **ibid.,** p.46, quoting the medieval commentator Abraham Ibn Ezra.
[5] Stanely Elkins: **Slavery: A Problem in American Institutional and Intellectual Life** (New York: Grosset and Dunlap, 1963), chapter 3.
[6] PauloFreire: **Pedagogy of the Oppressed** (New York, Herder and Herder, 1970), p.49-51.
[7] Walzer, **op. cit.,** p.26.
[8] for example, J. Severino Croatto: **Exodus: A Hermeneutics of Freedom** trans. Salvator Attanasio (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1981).

slavery in Egypt and the exploited poor who have to work in intolerable conditions in factories, sweatshops and plantations.

On a more individual level, feminist researchers in the U.S. have concluded that life in a still patriarchal society is the major reason for the current epidemic of women's depression: Greenspan observes that there is an "abiding, unconscious rage at our own oppression which has found no legitimate outlet."[9] Women and children frequently do not leave violent or abusive homes because of their despairing mentality. There is also the irony of our unemployed and unemployable youth, crushed by poverty, violence, and bleak living conditions, trapped without hope in lives of another kind of arbitrariness, and without the meaning and purpose of dignified work.

However, Croatto[10] points out that their cry of protest to Yahweh (Exodus 3:7) shows that they were not all, always, completely dispirited. "(This cry) points out...that people begin to be conscientized - and to embark on the path to liberation - when they implore, raise their voices, their shouts of protest and denunciation."[11] In our time, those who have lived with oppression begin their emancipation when they say to themselves or others, "That's enough. It's time to

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[9] M.Greenspan: **A New Approach to Women and Therapy** (New York: McGraw Hill, 1985), p.300.
[10] Croatto, **op. cit.**, p.17.
[11] Croatto, **ibid.**, p.20.

go." It is not sufficient that others say to them, "You need to leave"; the cry of protest must come from within.

Moreover, in the Exodus account, Yahweh hears their cry of protest (Exodus 3:7) and responds. Feminist theologians such as Nelle Morton describe the liberative and attentive process of "hearing each other into being"[12]; and she questions the orthodox view that we should wait patiently until God deigns to speak to us.

> "A more realistic alternative to such despair, or 'dark night of the soul', would see God not as silent, hidden or withdrawn, but as the hearing one - hearing us to our own responsible word."[13]

Moltmann writes that hopelessness and despair are as much a sin as pride. Resignation to present circumstances, he says, is not realistic.

> "Hope alone is to be called 'realistic', because it alone takes seriously the possibilities with which all reality is fraught. It does not take things as they happen to stand or lie, but as progressing, moving things with possibilities of change."[14]

Where does hope come from, when there simply is none? The cry of protest did not itself generate hope. It was Yahweh's promise that made possible the idea that there was

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[12] Nelle Morton: **The Journey is Home** (Boston: Beacon Press, 1985).
[13] Morton, **ibid.**, p.129.
[14] Jürgen Moltmann: **Theology of Hope** (London: SCM Press, 1967), p.23 and 25.

another, juster way of living, the hope that life did not need to be oppressive or corrupt.

Yahweh called Moses, an Israelite but not a slave like them, to lead the Israelites out of Egypt. Martin Buber writes that the Exodus was "the kind of liberation which cannot be brought about by anyone who grew up as a slave."[15] Moses was brought up in Pharaoh's court; if he had ever worked, it was not with bricks. A recurrent theme of this chapter is that God transforms situations by working in unexpected ways through unexpected people.

Gutierrez[16] points out that their leaving required two essential elements: Yahweh hearing and intervening through calling Moses; and the willingness to go of the Israelites. In spite of their fear they were willing to do up their belts, put on their sandals, pick up their staffs and head out into the wilderness because of Yahweh's promise. According to Walzer, many radicals have made the point[17] that the moral climax of a revolution comes at the beginning of the revolution, when oppressed men and women take their first steps toward freedom.

Leaving Egypt was not easy because of its luxuries; many of the Israelites enjoyed its decadence. In our own time there is a parallel with those who live with addicts in dysfunctional

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[15] Martin Buber: **Moses: The Revelation and the Covenant** (New York: Harper Torchbooks, 1958), p.35.
[16] Gustavo Gutierrez: **A Theology of Liberation** (London: SCM Press, 1974), ch.9.
[17] Walzer, **op. cit.**, p.116.

situations, and are codependent on the addiction. Although not addicted themselves, they may find it as hard as the addict to give up the addiction.[18] The idea of leaving may seem to them to be inexplicably difficult because they get some secondary gain out of the addiction.

The Egyptians did not want to lose their labour force, and Croatto[19] observes that oppressors never liberate either others or themselves. Threatened with losing them, they oppress with even greater violence. This increased oppression begets in the oppressed an inner fear, what Paulo Freire has termed the "fear of freedom",[20] the fear of taking up freedom with all its risks. The Israelites feared oppression; but they also feared freedom, the liberty that came with liberation.

As a story of radical hope and freedom the Exodus theme echoes throughout European and American history, politics and literature. It has also had a significant impact in Latin America. There, in the 1970s, Roman Catholic priests began the grassroots movement known as Liberation Theology, studying the Bible in base communities (*comunidades cristianas de base*) in the light of the particular problems of the people's daily lives. They used the Exodus account as their principal model; Gutierrez points out that "the Exodus experience is paradigmatic. It remains vital and contemporary due to similar historical experiences which the

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[18] See for example: Anne Wilson Schaef: **CoDependence: Misunderstood, Mistreated** (Harper & Row, 1986).
[19] Croatto, **op. cit.**, p.21.
[20] Freire,**op.cit.**, p.31-33.

People of God undergo."[21] Liberation theologians see the poverty-stricken masses yearning for liberation from their economic oppression like the Israelite slaves labouring in Egypt; and maintain that God did and still does intervene in human history. God is, writes Croatto, "the liberating God who still saves us today"[22]. God shows a preferential option for the poor wherever they cry out and work towards their own liberation.

Egyptian slavery was judged and condemned; and since then, oppression has been regarded as immoral. The Exodus would not have been possible without this moral judgment. Croatto[23] points out that the way that Israel "knew" God was in God's work of liberation, and, quoting Jeremiah 22:16, he says that doing justice to the oppressed is to know God. Thenceforth, he continues, to know God entails living liberation, and liberating others. There is, he notes, a similarity in Matthew 25: "When did we know thee?"

The Exodus, says Croatto, has not yet finished: "We are enjoined to prolong the Exodus event because it was not an event solely for the Hebrews, but rather the manifestation of a liberative plan of God for all peoples."[24] It is capable of generating other Exodus events, not only through the memory of the first Exodus, but because it is both divine plan and divine promise. For those who participate in base

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[21] Gutierrez, **op.cit.**, p.159.
[22] Croatto, **op.cit.**, p.v.
[23] Croatto, **ibid.**, p.42-3.
[24] Croatto, **ibid.**, p.15.

communities, reading the Bible together and working for greater justice, there is a heady sense of empowerment, of participating in God's plan with God taking their side.

Croatto[25] notes that, after the Exodus, the Israelites derived an enormous sense of security from the event: "And Israel saw the great work which the Lord did against the Egyptians, and the people feared the Lord; and they believed in the Lord and in his servant Moses" (Exodus 14:31). Perhaps, in retrospect, we all describe ourselves as more single-minded than we were at the time. In this unlikely place we hear the echo of Bowlby's theory: we derive security and confidence from past obstacles successfully tackled; and that memory will sustain our resilience through future crises.

One of the appeals of the Exodus account is the purposive, hopeful drive of its journey onward. The journey metaphor is full of promise and hopefulness. Moltmann writes:

> "The God of the exodus and of the resurrection 'is' not eternal presence, but he promises his presence and nearness to him who follows the path into which he is sent into the future."[26]

The Exodus account is a paradigm of leaving and journeying which is full of helpful images which add depth, understanding and hope to the responses of those who must uproot from an intolerable situation: the wrenching escape from slavery and the charms of decadence, the cry of protest

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[25] Croatto, **ibid.**, p.24.
[26] Moltmann, **op.cit.**, p.30.

and God's response, the unexpected leader, God's promise and the beginning of hope, the fearful but willing slaves, the fear of oppression and the fear of freedom, the command to continue the process of liberation and God's preferential option for the poor, the sense of competence which a successful challenge gives us, and the purposeful hope-filled journey towards a juster home.

B. THE WILDERNESS JOURNEY

Another enduring image of homelessness in the Bible is in Israel's memory of the wilderness. The wilderness generation is remembered largely for being stiff-necked murmurers. Homelessness is shattering and it almost shattered those wilderness wanderers. A generation died there; yet it was in the unlikely wilderness that the frightened slaves were transformed by Yahweh into people capable of making the covenant and worthy of the promised land.

The wilderness was remembered for being chaotic and inhospitable. It was not just an uncomfortable transition place, a refugee camp, an Ellis island; it provided no life support, no food, no water, no shelter. There was nothing there to give life any order and meaning: a familiar experience for those who are homeless. Worse, the wilderness could offer no hope for the future: not only was it "a land unsown", (Jeremiah 2:2), but it was unsowable. There was no

possibility for the promises of Yahweh here; the Israelites had been tricked. None of the attributes of home were to be found in the wilderness: it was not a place to belong to, or a source of nourishment and shelter, or a place of good relationship. The wilderness is a powerful metaphor for the experience of being as desolate, as homeless as it is possible to be.

The Israelites felt nostalgia in the wilderness for the providence of Egypt: "We would rather be slaves to the Egyptians than die here in the wilderness," they moaned (Exodus 14:11-12). In their distress their memories were distorted; slavery was remembered as provident and safe, although it had been set up with their extermination in mind. "If only we had died at the Lord's hand in Egypt, where we sat around the fleshpots and had plenty of bread to eat!" (Exodus16:3). The anguish of their rootlessness was expressed in their longing for root vegetables: "In Egypt we had fish for the asking, cucumbers and water-melons, leeks and onions and garlic." (Numbers 11:5). Remembering and misremembering is more than simple recall; it is a creative activity, simplifying and therefore distorting the object of remembrance. Memory is always fallible, but especially under duress, and the wilderness had a drastic effect on them. The famished prodigal son felt similar nostalgia for the providence of his father's house.

Where there is neither hope nor meaning, faith is seriously challenged, yet Israel was called to be a people of

faith in that hopeless place. With their dramatic escape from Egyptian slavery behind them and the promise of land before them, it was impossible for them to believe that they would have to make their home, for the time being, in the desolation between two provident lands. What they had to learn was the flexibility of spirit that comes only with faith and hope, not with slavery or despair.

They yearned for the security that land provides. Instead, in the wilderness, they learned that it is not the land that provides resources, but Yahweh. Yahweh's glory was known and Yahweh's presence was perceived in Yahweh's transformations of the seemingly impossible: the transformation from slavery to freedom, from hunger to manna and water. Manna, like Moses, was unexpectedly sent to carry out Yahweh's transformations. Perhaps only in wilderness situations, such as dark suffering or life-threatening illness, do we really know that life itself is gifted to us. Brueggemann[27] observes that in the wilderness Israel discovered what uprooted people discover: that in landlessness there may be unexpected sustaining resources, to be received with gratitude; or, we may discern there only darkness and abandonment.

After the provision of manna, some of the Israelites realized that they had misunderstood both the wilderness and Yahweh. Perhaps Yahweh would carry out Yahweh's promises in ways that they had not imagined. Others quarrelled,

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[27] Brueggemann, **op.cit.**, p.35.

murmured, and looked backwards nostalgically to Egypt. They limited themselves to imagining two choices: slavery in Egypt or death in the wilderness.

There were others such as Moses, Aaron, Joshua, Caleb, who continued to live in hope, trusting in Yahweh's promises, patiently enduring the hardships. They saw that the future does not have to be limited to just two choices. They saw wilderness, not as banishment, but as a route of promise to the good land. They focussed not on the hardship surrounding them but on the richness of what was promised. To them, repentance meant taking responsibility for themselves and facing freedom fearlessly. All that they had to do was to keep on keeping on. "Hope," writes Moltmann, "is nothing less than the expectation of those things which faith has believed to have been truly promised by God."[28]

Those who "despise" the promised land are condemned, while those who maintain hope get to the land. It is a recurrent biblical theme that what is despised turns out, ultimately, to be lifted up (e.g. Isaiah 53:3 and I Corinthians 1:28); God effects transformations in unexpected ways. Like beauty, despising is in the eye of the beholder. We cannot live in covenant with a person whom we despise or in a place that we despise. We learn to appreciate what seems despicable only when we realize how much we need that person, that place.

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[28] Moltmann, **op. cit.**, p.20.

The sustenance and the ongoing movement towards fulfillment were assurances of God's presence. However, Israel never got what it most wanted from Yahweh: the assurance that it would, indeed, get to the land. God does not assure continuities, but works new things out of discontinuities. God's presence is evident not in keeping old things going, but in bringing life out of death.

Neither Israel nor anyone else chooses the wilderness; but in the wilderness traditions it finds out that landlessness as a way to land is bearable, because Yahweh is there with them. The joy of living in relationship with Yahweh outweighs the lack of comfort, predictability and the other attributes of 'home'. Brueggemann observes that

> "only those who fully face the wilderness will discern this fresh understanding of wilderness and of Yahweh. A remarkable affirmation is made: the place of all lacks, because Yahweh is there, becomes the place where nothing is lacking."[29]

It is one of those discoveries that is only made with hindsight. It is the experience of many people of faith that when they were at their most precarious, the presence of God seemed more joyful and sustaining than ever before or since; and like manna, never to be presumed or planned.

There were the murmurers in the wilderness; in fact, the "murmurer" has evolved as a Jewish stereotype, not someone

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[29] Brueggemann, **op.cit.**, p.44.

adjusted to slavery but who complains endlessly about his/her freedom. The people rebelled against the rules that had come with manna, misremembering Egypt as a place of freedom. In slavery there is a sort of freedom, a childish irresponsibility, the inability or the refusal to take decisions and to uphold them. In freedom there is the bondage of responsibility. Like us today, the Israelites could only become free as they accepted the obligations and responsibilities of freedom. Maimonides writes that

> "the deity....causes the people to wander perplexedly in the desert until their souls become courageous... and until people were born who were not accustomed to humiliation and servitude."[30]

The Israelites fashioned a golden calf, reminiscient of Apis, one of the gods of Egypt; regressing to past sources of comfort is a common experience for those in stress and uncertainty. Physically, their escape from Egypt's bondage had been highly dramatic; spiritually and politically, it was much slower. This is a lesson to be drawn from Exodus again and again. Gutierrez, writing about the "long march" of hardship and struggle, writes:

> "A gradual pedagogy of successes and failures would be necessary for the Jewish people to become aware of the roots of their oppression, to struggle against it, and to perceive the profound sense of the liberation to which they were called."[31]

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[30] Maimonides, quoted in Walzer, **op.cit.**, p.54.
[31] Gutierrez, **op.cit.**, p.156-7.

Walzer notes that the people described as broken-spirited in Egypt are now described as stiff-necked; but mostly, he says, they behave "like ordinary men and women recalcitrant in the face of God's demand that they be something more than ordinary."[32] Like homeless people today, their resolution wavered between courage and cowardice, between commitment and betrayal. Yahweh had not promised simply to bring them to the promised land of milk and honey. Yahweh had said: "Ye shall be unto me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation." Yahweh's call was not just to a provident place to which they could belong, but to life together in covenant relationship with Yahweh.

Walzer points out[33] that the paradox of the Exodus and of other liberation struggles is the people's ambivalence about putting Egypt behind them. The paradox speaks to us today as it demonstrates the deeply human nature of the Israelites. They longed both for freedom and to avoid the responsibilities of freedom. They both accepted and resisted the discipline of the march. They believed that they had left the idols and oppression of Egypt behind them, and discovered that they had brought them along with them. Walzer[34] observes that the vital struggle of the Exodus is the struggle in the wilderness, and into the promised land, to create a free people and to live up to the terms of the covenant. Living in the chaos between lands does not mean living chaotically; it is the time to break

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[32] Walzer, **op.cit.**, p.69.
[33]Walzer, **ibid.**, p.73.
[34]Walzer, **ibid.**, p.141.

out of the old shackles, and freely to take on real responsibilities.

In Egypt, the Israelites were a people through their shared memories and experience of oppression. Their identity was in a sense passive, something that had happened to them. Only as they made commitments to the covenant did they actively assume an identity and make themselves into a people. They then were capable of making and keeping decisions and accepting risk. Walzer[35] points out that free will is a gift of God, which makes it possible for people to cooperate, if not always in liberation itself, then in the patient work necessary to make liberation permanent. They can promise and keep their promises. Covenant is where we make our home.

For all wilderness wanderers, we see that the wilderness can be a good place and a frightful place. We see themes here of looking backwards with distorting nostalgia, murmuring, despising, misunderstanding, cynicism, despair, self-pity, idolatry, and the rejection of the unknown. They are the temptations, the all too human responses to the terror of the wilderness. Then there are themes of gratitude for unanticipated sources of sustenance and for life as unmerited gift, hope in the future, trust in the promises of Yahweh, and an openness to the unexpected, even the despicable. We see also the transformation from slave thinking to free thinking so that true covenant relationship can be created. Freedom means obligation. In the end those who get to the other side

[35]Walzer, **ibid.**, p.81.

of the wilderness are those who maintain the spirit of hopefulness. Hope in Yahweh affirms that there are more possibilities than we can imagine; even a land unsown can be home for the time being, if Yahweh is there.

C. THE EXILE

One of the outstanding accounts of uprooting in the Bible is to be found in the literature of the exile. In 597 and 587/6 B.C.E. the Babylonian armies conquered Judah and deported most of the population to Babylon. According to Ackroyd[36], the Jews in Babylon enjoyed a certain amount of freedom to order their own affairs; they were not mistreated like prisoners of war or inmates of concentration camps. Nevertheless, Israel was a defeated nation and exiled from its land; it had lost its independence, its monarchy and its Temple. The Jews had food and a place to live, but for most of them Babylon never became their home. Most important, they no longer enjoyed the sense of being in right relationship with Yahweh. This echoes our theme in the last chapter that although we may enjoy many of the attributes of home, if "covenant relationship" is not there we still yearn for something more.

As in any time of crisis and radical change, the exilic age raised questions about sources of identity and grounds for

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[36] Peter R. Ackroyd: **Exile and Restoration** (London: SCM Press, 1968), p.32.

hope, about the cause of the disaster and how to live with it, and questions about who or what to worship. According to Ralph Klein,[37] the exilic theologians "made the most of their disaster". The power of the exilic writings is not in their literal truthfulness, but in their ability to maintain Israel's faith during the exile, to trust Yahweh's promise, and to maintain community when everything seemed lost: tasks which are faced by all exiles. We may "make the most of our disasters" by reading Israel's exilic literature: through it we may still speak of God to those who are uprooted.

One source of crisis in the exile was the collapse of fundamental Jewish symbol systems. The symbols that stood most powerfully for who they were, and whose they were, had gone. The Temple in Jerusalem had symbolized their election as the chosen people; now it was burned down. The Davidic dynasty, which Yahweh had promised would be eternal, was ended. Most painful of all, they were exiled from the land promised to their ancestors by Yahweh and to which Yahweh had led them.

Certain irreplaceable losses are deeply traumatic for any people: the loss of national independence, the loss of a place of worship or community memorial, the loss of any leader and especially a king, the loss of land. For the Jews, the trauma was magnified by the fact that the symbols they had lost had each stood for the fulfillment of Yahweh's promise. Therefore, what was almost intolerable was what was

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[37]Ralph W. Klein: **Israel in Exile** (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1979), p.7.

symbolized by the losses. It seemed that Yahweh was not strong enough or committed enough to defend them from other nations; and worse, that Yahweh had now abandoned or rejected them, and was now carrying out the curse of the covenant because of their disobedience. What kind of life, what kind of future could possibly be imagined for a people rejected or cursed by an eternal and omnipotent deity?

Similar trauma and despair are felt today by those whose symbol systems have collapsed. They are felt, too, by those whose suffering leads them to believe that they are abandoned, rejected or cursed by God and/or society. For them the future holds no hope of reprieve, and promises have no meaning. Melanie Klein suggests that that is the situation of criminals.[38] Mental illness, family breakdown, homelessness, persecution, civil war and other traumas are related to the collapse of fundamental symbol systems where what was once a source of good, or supposed to be good, turns out to be a source of inescapable destruction.

The responses of the Israelites to exile reflected the gravity of the disaster. The literature shows their nostalgic longing. "By the rivers of Babylon - there we sat down and there we wept when we remembered Zion. On the willows there we hung up our harps" (Psalm 137:1-2). It also shows

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[38] Melanie Klein writes, "If there is nothing in the world but enemies, and that is how the criminal feels, his hate and destructiveness are, in his view, to a great extent justified - an attitude which relieves some of his unconscious feelings of guilt..." Melanie Klein: "On Criminality" in **Love, Guilt, and Reparation and Other Works 1921-1945** (New York: Delacorte/Seymour Lawrence Press, 1975), p.260.

their search for explanations: for example, perhaps the catastrophe was caused by Josiah's abolition of the worship of local deities (Jeremiah 44:18). There was despair: "Our bones are dried up, our hope is lost; we are clean cut off" (Ezekiel 37:11). Longing, the search for explanations, despair: all these are normal responses to crisis in our day too.

In outrage, Israel also accused Yahweh of behaving like an enemy against Yahweh's own people: "The Lord played an enemy's part and overwhelmed Israel" (Lamentations 2:5). They protested their innocence: "All this has befallen us, but we do not forget thee and have not betrayed thy covenant" (Psalm 44:17). Inevitably, there was the temptation to migrate to the apparently more powerful gods of Babylon: "Let us be like the nations, like the tribes of the countries, and worship wood and stone" (Ezekiel 20:32).

Other Israelite responses demonstrated their uncertainty about how they could faithfully face the present disaster and the unimaginable future. In times of great change there is frequently a call for "back to basics", a return to the old promises, as in the Priestly writing. There is also a recognition of the need for something altogether new, such as new saving acts by Yahweh, as in Second Isaiah; they remembered that the creation demonstrated Yahweh's still mighty power. Although assimilation to Babylonian culture might have seemed more realistic and successful, there was a renewed consciousness of the need to maintain their own unique covenantal identity by means of visible signs such as

circumcision and sabbath observance, signs that distinguished the Israelites from the surrounding peoples.

This echoes our observation in chapter one of the primordial dread of nonexistence or loss of identity often expressed after relocation: Indians moving from country village to city street, refugees fleeing to another country, even women moving with their husband's work to a different part of the country, voice their anguish: "Nobody knows who I am". They grip more tightly their tools, their songs, their rituals, their symbols, their familiar food, their cherished belongings, so that others, and they themselves, will "know who they are".

While there was deep grief: "Look, Lord, and see: who is it that thou thus has tormented?" (Lamentations 2:18-21), it was consoled by the announcement of the prophets that their suffering could be redemptive. Israel's patient endurance of exile, still trusting only in Yahweh, and her transformed emergence from exile, would make her a light to the nations (Second Isaiah). In our own day, bearing suffering patiently is becoming much less common: we live in a society that believes that there must be some medicine, or therapy, or government intervention that should be able to cure or prevent suffering.

Klein identifies certain themes that the theologians of the exile pressed home. One of the themes is that there are no easy solutions to exile; the problems of rootless, uprooted,

despairing people are profound. Although it is tempting to look for it, there is no easy deliverance or cheap grace to be had. The problems of exile will not go away speedily; they may get worse or they may not go away at all.

However, there is the hopeful theme that it is possible to live faithfully with contradictions. Jeremiah's advice to Israel in exile was that they must make exile their home for the time being. We only have the here and now in which to carry out our vocation. Jeremiah told the Israelites: "Seek the welfare of any city to which I have carried you off, and pray to the Lord for it; on its welfare your welfare will depend." (Jeremiah 29:7). They were to accept their exile, but they were not to let it overcome them. Klein also observes that exile is a time of hope, but not of triumphalism. Complete denial of the seriousness of exile is cheap triumphalism; complete resignation to exile is hopelessness. Exile is a call to live "as if".

> "To say yes and no is to affirm the judgment, it is to recognize the exilic existence as our real vocation, and yet to confess and actualize the transforming power of the Promiser."[39]

The images of the Exile show a people trying to make sense of an event that should have destroyed them. Yet out of that frightful situation blossomed some of the Bible's most beautiful writing in second Isaiah, tender and hope-filled. Those who live in exile face many temptations; but they may

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[39] Ralph Klein, **op.cit.**, p.151.

find here words to give them courage. The temptation is to settle for speedy answers; but there are no easy solutions. The temptation is to simplify, minimize or overlook the problems; but you can live with contradictions. The temptation is to become twisted by pain; but you can bear suffering patiently. The temptation is to become totally assimilated; but you can hold on to your unique identity. The temptation is to give in to despair; but you can boldly affirm God's love and forgiveness, and ground your hope in God's promises which are fulfilled in unexpected ways. The temptation in exile is to feel cast off, bereft, rootless, ungrounded; but you can make your home, for the time being, in this exile and you can pray for the welfare of your enemy's city. Finally, although those who suffer exile experience it both as the end and endless, the future always holds out the hope that it will be transformed, by restoration or by some other "new thing" of God, to a place that they can truly call their own.

D. THE BOOK OF RUTH

The book of Ruth, the story of a stranger in a strange land, could have been written in the pre-monarchic period, when abuse of women underlay most episodes in the book of Judges; or it could have been written at any time of the Judean

monarchy. However, Lacoque[40] suggests, with others, that it was written as a politically subversive pamphlet in the fourth century B.C.E, to oppose the Ezra-Nehemiah effort to dissolve mixed marriages. Ruth was a Moabite woman; Moab was a nation that, for Israel, represented perversion. The hostility between the two peoples originated when Moabite women tried to seduce the Israelites travelling from Egypt to Canaan (Numbers 25:1ff); since then, they had been despised by the Jews and excluded from their assemblies "for ever" (Nehemiah 13:1).

Ruth journeys to live in Bethlehem with Naomi, her widowed Jewish mother-in-law. The unwelcome presence of this alien widow in Bethlehem is resolved, in the end, not by her expulsion, but by her marriage with the Jew Boaz. They marry according to the law of Moses, thereby invalidating the ostracism against the Moabites. Additionally, Boaz's fulfillment of Torah is blessed because it results, eventually, in King David.

The book of Ruth is a gynocentric book; it may well have been written by a woman. The majority of the literature quoted here is feminist, because the book has essential elements of subversiveness which a feminist reading enhances, and because relocation, as we have seen, has particular issues for women. Ruth was a woman, a widow, childless, poor, an alien from a despised race, with an old

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[40] Andre Lacoque: **The Feminine Unconventional: Four Subversive Figures in Israel's Tradition** (Minneapolis:Fortress Press, 1990), p.100.

woman dependent on her; her outlook was bleak. What does this story have to say to our present-day Ruths and to the communities where they come to live?

There is general agreement among scholars that the book of Ruth was written to illustrate *hesed*, the constant care and steadfast lovingkindness which is one of the attributes of Yahweh in covenant relationship with the Jews, and the response of "people of worth" to that lovingkindness. Ruth, Boaz and Naomi each embody the spirit of the covenant; they worship Yahweh and they build up life together in covenant community. They also transcend both the patriarchal abuses[41] of the days of the Judges, and the xenophobia of the time of Ezra and Nehemiah.

Naomi demonstrates *hesed* as she journeys to Bethlehem with Ruth and Orpah. She instructs them to return to their mother's house in Moab, although she would then be left even more destitute. She invokes on them the *hesed* of Yahweh. Trible points out[42] that the basis for her invocation is not the past goodness of Yahweh, but the gracious hospitality shown to her in Moab by her daughters-in-law: "May the Lord deal kindly with you, as you have (already) dealt with the dead and with me" (Ruth1:8). Two female foreigners become models of *hesed* for Yahweh: a striking blessing indeed!

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[41] Adrien J. Bledstein: "Female Companionships: If the Book of Ruth Were Written By a Woman'" in A. Brenner (ed): **A Feminist Companion to Ruth** (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1993), p.118.

[42] Phyllis Trible: **God and the Rhetoric of Sexuality** (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1978), p.169.

Orpah decides, reasonably, to go back to Moab. Ruth, of similar background, shows none of Orpah's reasonableness: she insists on accompanying Naomi, in one of the most beloved speeches of the Bible. She will boldly go with Naomi, wherever; she commits herself to Naomi's people and to Naomi's God. Rashkow[43] points out that Ruth has already disavowed her birth family, the possibility of remarriage and children, her own people and identity as a Moabite, and her own native religious affiliation; she is simply declaring what has already taken place.

What is voiced here may not just be a selfless commitment to care for a helpless old woman, as some commentators suggest. It is deep love between two women, which is uncommon in a history where women, handmaids and sisters are rivals for the favours of men. It is a decision for "life together" with a beloved woman friend, rather than for the quest for a husband, in a culture where women needed husbands in order to survive. It is also an expression of commitment. Her commitment to be with Naomi and Naomi's God is stronger than her need for a place to belong. We have already noted in chapter one the importance of friendship among women; we have also noted the importance of commitment to give life meaning and purpose, and in chapter two we saw the immense importance of "life together". Ruth's faith in the *hesed* of Yahweh undergirds her commitment to

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[43] Ilona Rashkow: "Ruth: The Discourse of Power and the Power of Discourse" ed. A. Brenner **A Feminist Companion to Ruth** (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1993), p.32.

Yahweh of the Israelites, and is surely the model of her own steadfast character.

Ruth's risky decision to leave her homeland to go with old Naomi to Israel is paralleled in the biblical accounts only by Abraham. However, he had a clear call and promise from Yahweh; and he was accompanied by Sarah, his servants, and his flocks. Ruth had no similar covenant or call from Yahweh, and only a grieving old widow for company. It was Ruth who chose Yahweh. She lived faithfully, lovingly and riskily; and Yahweh's plan and *Heilgeschichte* were carried forward through her, as it often was through despised and unexpected channels. In the end, her unreasonable decision to go with Naomi was vindicated by the birth of Obed.

The *hesed* of Ruth is manifested in various ways when she and Naomi arrive in Bethlehem. She does well the things that she can do. She remains attentive to Naomi, who eventually stops despairing and recovers her identity as a wise old woman capable of crafting a plan for their survival. Ruth's *hesed* is also shown in the initiative and hard work that she puts into her gleaning. She works out her own salvation in a strange land, without expecting God or man to rescue her.

Hesed is also manifested in her knowledge of Israeli laws and customs, such as those surrounding gleaning and the levirate. It is also demonstrated in her calling Boaz to task: apparently he knew that he had needy kin in Bethlehem but had

not acted on this knowledge (2:11)[44]. She calls Boaz to the task of carrying out both his prayer for her blessing and his obligation as her redeemer.

Hesed is also manifested in her desire to fulfill the levirate, which was her duty, even though in the course of doing it she could have been accused of immoral behaviour. She also had a right to fulfil the levirate, in order to claim support from her deceased husband's family. Lacoque notes[45] that the levirate was designed for the protection of Israelite property, so the application of the levirate to a Moabite widow would definitely have been unusual. Perhaps there are elements of irony when Boaz calls her "a woman of worth" (3:11) in the threshing room; and the Bethlehem women tell Naomi that Ruth is "better than seven sons"(4:15).

The book of Ruth demonstrated to the xenophobic Israelites the importance of accepting, not rejecting, people of other races. An alien Moabite widow brought unexpected blessing to the Israelites through being the grandmother of King David. An alien widow was an outstanding model of *hesed.* An alien widow was an unexpected assurance of the *hesed* of Yahweh: she provides a son for the childless "man of worth" Boaz, a name for the dead Israelite Elimelech, a redeemer for the widow Naomi, an appropriate destination for Naomi's land, and a vital royal ancestor for Israel, as well as a respected home for herself.

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[44] He may have thought that was the responsibility of 'So-and-So', the nearer kinsman.
[45] Lacoque, **op.cit.** p.86.

Trible[46] observes that Boaz, the "man of worth", is "a true child of Israel" in his concern for this foreign woman. He realizes that Israel, too, lives as a stranger and sojourner in the world. His blessing of Ruth envelops her within the Abrahamic paradigm of the foreigner who cuts ties with the past and receives the promise of blessing for the future. He also carries out the command to be hospitable, a theme we explored in chapter two:

> "When an alien settles with you in your land, you shall not oppress him. He shall be treated as a native born among you, and you shall love him as a man like yourself, because you were aliens in Egypt. I am the Lord your God" (Leviticus 19:33-4).

Bledstein[47] points out that *hesed* is not just lovingkindness; it also includes carefulness, the shrewdness of Boaz in getting around "So-and-So" (Ruth 4:5), who had a closer kin relationship to Ruth, and therefore first obligation to fulfil the levirate with her. Having called a blessing on Ruth, Boaz is himself willing to be the source of that blessing for her. By doing so, he is blessed, himself, with a wife who is "a woman of worth", an infant son Obed, an unexpected parcel of land, and immortality as an ancestor of King David. The message to the Jews who listened to or read this story must have been clear indeed.

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[46] Trible, **op.cit.**, p.177.
[47] Bledstein, **op.cit.**, p 129.

Ruth's *hesed* governs her values. She loves and provides for Naomi. As a "woman of worth" she has confidence in herself and awakens confidence in others. She takes risks, shows initiative, works hard, is realistic in outlook, makes the most of opportunities that come up, knows the customs of the alien land, and uses them to her benefit. In a restrictive culture, she makes the most of her options: her assertiveness in asking to glean among the sheaves attracts Boaz' attention. She also refuses to be held down or back by being a woman of despised Moabite race.[48]

Trible draws attention[49] to the overlooked fact that the women have different perspectives from the men in this story, but their perspectives are complementary. The women need a home and a husband in order to survive; the men want to see the restoration of the name of Elimelech to his inheritance. We have already seen that clashing perspectives are a source of stress and distress; complementary perspectives add harmony, richness and success to the endeavours of each one without depleting their energy.

What does this story have to say to the communities where aliens come to live? It says that the only way in which to receive them is with hospitality. It says that it makes no sense to live in prejudice against other human beings, on the

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[48] In fact, she uses it to her advantage. Lacoque (op. cit., p.108) points out that Moab was a semi-nomadic nation where women were not veiled and were much freer than in rural milieus. Since Moabite women were more accustomed than Jewish women to a free and easy relationship with men, it is possible that Ruth went to the threshing room without as much hesitation as a Jewish woman.

[49] Trible, **op.cit.**, p.192-3.

basis of their ancestors' bad behaviour. Reiterating the theme of unexpectedness in this chapter, it says that aliens bring unexpected blessings for the community which receives them generously; and they may bring the blessings which are necessary for the community which receives them, but which the community is unable to achieve on its own. It says that even a settled community like Bethlehem must never forget that they were once aliens, and on that basis they will never have the right to close their doors against the needy stranger, knocking at their door in search of sustenance and loving community.

IMPLICATIONS

In this chapter we have looked at some biblical and theological images of uprooting, journeying and homelessness in the accounts of the Exodus, the wilderness, the exile, and the book of Ruth. We have seen some of the temptations of the uprooted life: despair, lack of courage, the pursuit of other gods and looking backwards with nostalgic longing. There was also the temptation of untruthfulness: the false memory of Egypt as safe, plentiful and free, the false perception of the promised land as despicable.

We have also looked at images which may deepen a faith response to uprootedness by acknowledging complexity and contradiction. One idea is that we can live faithfully with

contradiction, if we live with *hesed* and with hope. Another idea is that we can make anywhere our home, even wilderness or exile, for the time being. This place, right now, is the only state that we have to carry out our vocation. With Yahweh present, that is enough. We can be grateful for the life that is gifted to us.

A third idea to emerge is that the only realistic way to respond to impossible situations is with hope in God, who goes on ahead of us into the future. God transforms impossible situations in unexpected ways through unexpected, even despised people. The fourth idea, which is carried over from the previous chapter, is that willingness, responsibility and commitment are required of us to build up life together in covenant relationship with God and with each other, wherever we may hang our hats.

CHAPTER 4

OUR PASTORAL RESPONSE

TO THE ISSUES OF RELOCATION

A bank manager commits suicide. His widow, a housewife, has to vacate the bank house, so she moves with her three daughters to a flat. She must find work and the children have to start a new school.

An elderly widow breaks her leg in a car accident. Her son persuades her to leave her house, full of memories with her late husband, to live in a 'granny flat' with him and his family in a distant city.

A divorced 30 year old engineer is made redundant. The only work available is in Kuwait. After he moves he will not be able to see his two children regularly. He is the only child of his aging parents.

A single woman with a small daughter is applying to the Local Authority as homeless. During the last year she has lived in a refuge, temporary bed and breakfasts, private rented accommodation, and slept rough. The little girl suffers from respiratory and psycho-social problems.

A family of Bosnian refugees has received a permit to remain in Britain for one year. They do not know what will happen after that as they now have no nationality.

Having looked at the problems of relocation and our need for both homesteading and journeying, we will start our final chapter with a model of relocation which enables individuals to honour their love for the old place at the same time as affirming their vocation in the new place. Then we will look at the pastoral care of those who have the complicated responses associated with relocation that we outlined in the first chapter. We will then look at the issues of relocation for families, in particular for children. Finally, we will look at our responsibilities to those who are most hopelessly uprooted, the refugees and the homeless, to see how we can welcome in these strangers as we would welcome Christ himself.

It is not good to be alone; "made in the image of God" means that we are made to be relational. Jesus sent his disciples out two by two on their first uncertain mission; and he asked his closest friends to watch and pray with him as he faced his last and loneliest journey. We have seen throughout this study that social support is necessary for all of us as we cope with disruption; Bowlby maintained that it is healthy, not immature or pathological to turn to others for support. As an image of pastoral care we will use the idea of the

Companion on the Journey: the journey being on several levels: the literal journey of relocation, the parallel inner transformation, which is slower and harder, and the spiritual journey which we are making throughout our lives.

In his image of the Companion on the Journey[1], Alastair Campbell describes a pastoral journey shared. He observes that, while travelling together, companions share bread, repose, and comradeship at death. The companion may not know the destination or the way or any better, but her presence, courage and integrity can keep the other moving ever onwards, and the unknown is less daunting when we are not alone.

The bread shared may be literal bread, or it may be the hope that sustains the other during uncertainty or despair. Hunter[2] observes that the Christian hope that we share means that, whether we recover health or not, whether life recovers its meaning or not, even whether we live or die, we are each worthy human beings whom nothing can separate from the love of the crucified God.

The companion, says Campbell, also offers repose: respite from anxious striving, and respect for the necessary rhythms of work and rest. We invite our companion to imagine, to dream, to reflect, to play, and simply to enjoy friendship

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[1] Alastair V. Campbell: **op.cit.,** p.90.

[2] Rodney J.Hunter: "Moltmann's Theology of the Cross and the Dilemma of Contemporary Pastoral Care" in Jürgen Moltmann: **Hope for the Church: Moltmann in Dialogue with Practical Theology** (Nashville: Abingdon, 1979), p.90.

together. These are the activities of "sacred space", the enjoyment of "life together".

One particular aspect of repose, says Campbell, is worship. Psalm 46:10 reminds us: "Be still and know that I am God." Together with the community of the baptised, we remember our common reliance on God. Westerhoff and Willimon[3] observe that worship is not for education; but while people are worshipping God, they are also learning how the people of God think, feel and act in the face of challenges. Ramshaw[4] points out that by recalling the promises of the past, the liturgy is also recalling our future hope. By recalling the history of Israel and the life of Jesus, we know who we are and whose we are: the children of a loving God adopted in baptism and the followers of Jesus in the way of the cross. In worship we see and remember again the ongoing connection between our own small human story and the divine story.

The journeying companion also offers comradeship in the face of death. Relocation may be accompanied by devastating losses, including irrevocable losses, failures, tragedy and death. The companion has the courage to face the seriousness of the loss through his own experience of loss and of transcending that loss. He does not avoid the anger and grief that tragedy brings; nor does he comfort with cheerful optimism. Many people entertain the false notions that life

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[3] John H. Westerhoff III and William H.Willimon: **Liturgy and Learning Through The Life Cycle** (Minneapolis: Seabury Press, 1980), p.99.
[4] Elaine Ramshaw: **op. cit.**, p.93.

should be easy, pain can be avoided, and nothing is really lost. The companion of integrity offers no cheap consolation to dark suffering. He also holds out the conviction that death has no final victory, but that we live in hope of resurrection and God's power to bring forth new life.

The image of companionship is not limited to individuals; pastoral accompaniment is an essential feature of Liberation Theology. Archbishop Romero[5] preached that the church community must see itself not as the only centre of God's attention, but as pastoral accompaniment to God's broader plan for the liberation of all humanity. Faithful members of Christian base communities walk and work in solidarity with everyone, Christian or not, who is committed to a more just society and the liberation of those who are oppressed. They witness to Christ through their love and commitment, Christian values and theological reflection. Strength, courage and hope for the journey are inspired and sustained by companionship.

A. A MODEL OF RELOCATION

Ramshaw observes that people have a sense of "touching on the numinous in times of transition, or at least a wish for cosmic reassurance arising out of the insecurity of

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[5] Oscar Romero: **Voice of the Voiceless. Four Pastoral Letters and Other Statements** (Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 1985).

liminality."[6] Some people relocate on a certain saint's day, under a lucky combination of stars, or on the first day of spring. In times of insecurity we may feel less established in society, less embedded in our own history, less grounded in our own identity. Ramshaw observes our need for the power of blessing to root us here and to root us now, to make this space and this time sacred.

When we participate with faith in ritual, we believe that God's grace is somehow made real for us. A ritual helps to make sense of change in our own lives, and it restores order in the community affected by change; it also reminds everyone that change has meaning and purpose as part of God's good creation. Westerhoff and Willimon[7] term rituals of change "rites of life crisis". They point out that these rites, like the rites of passage first described by the anthropologist Van Gennep[8], have three phases: a separation phase characterized by ceremonial withdrawal of persons from their previous role; a transitional liminal phase in which persons are prepared for their new role and status; and a re-entry phase which ritually establishes persons in their new status and reincorporates them into the community.

The ritual of moving outlined by Westerhoff and Willimon[9] would take place at Sunday morning worship, in the presence and support of the worshipping community. It begins with a

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[6] Ramshaw: **op. cit.,** p.45.
[7] Westerhoff and Willimon: **op. cit.,** p.101.
[8] Arnold van Gennep: **The Rites of Passage** (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1960).
[9] Westerhoff and Willimon: **op. cit.,** p.136.

time of remembering what that place and its people have meant to the people there. There would follow a Bible reading, and a meditation on the biblical and theological significance of that particular move and of moving in general. There would follow a reflection on the Christian significance of leave-taking and of welcoming; and a public response or farewell. Finally, the community commits the participants to God's love and care through bestowing a blessing on them.

They observe that the ceremonial rite is a telescoped version of a process that in reality takes place over time: a wedding, for example, is a telescoped version of what happens between the engagement and the honeymoon. Similarly, the process of relocation can be seen as an expanded version of the rite outlined above, and it too consists of separation (leave-taking), liminality (transition) and reincorporation (resettlement).

1. Leavetaking

Good leavetaking is like good grieving: it has to start with fully accepting the unavoidable reality of leaving. It means recognizing all of our loves in order to grieve them, letting them go with thankfulness, and allowing them to become cherished memories. As leavetaking is essential but painful work, the companion's task is to ensure that it does get done; packing up or determined cheerfulness can be a cunning way of denying the impending losses.

Henri Nouwen[10] describes leaving as an art, the ability to be "articulately absent". We cannot avoid the pain of saying goodbye but we can leave good memories: loving words, shared memories, joyful celebrations. Leaving good memories is a ministry both to those who leave and to those who are left; it increases our resilience throughout all kinds of change, giving us confidence in our capacity for both loving and for transcending the sadness of parting. This is how our children learn how to deal with loss. Jesus himself left indelible memories of love for his disciples in his farewell discourses (John 13-17). Only in the memory of his life and words were the disciples able to grasp the meaning of what they had witnessed.

Hard memories and bad friends are what most of us try to forget, but forgotten, painful memories can exert a crippling long-term effect. It may even be necessary to grieve a situation in which nobody cared enough to say goodbye to us. Joyce Rupp[11] suggests simple prayers to help the healing of painful memories: the prayer involves naming the loss or hurt, reflecting deeply on it, enacting a ritual involving both a symbol of that memory and a movement away from it, and a reorientation which enables healing to begin.

In our examples, the companion would be there with the woman in the bankhouse as she deals with the anguished

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[10] Henri J.M. Nouwen: **The Living Reminder** (San Francisco: Harper and Row, 1982), p.44.
[11] Joyce Rupp, osm: **Praying our Goodbyes** (Notre Dame: Ave Maria Press, 1988), p.83.

memories of her husband, and also says goodbye to friends, familiar community and lifestyle; trying to remember and hold on to the love she has known and the times that have been good. The companion would also be there with her daughters as they say goodbye to a fathered family, to friends and community and school, and take along good memories of all of these to their next situation: all in the aftermath of severe trauma. Relocating after multiple and serious losses, in the wake of a traffic accident or suicide, may be a traumatic experience indeed and needs the support of faithful companionship to keep on track.

In chapter three we saw how the Exodus began only as the Israelites' cry of protest was heard. The companion also hears the cry of protest of someone trapped in an intolerable situation, perhaps an abusive home or work situation, and thereby accompanies the liberation process. The task is to keep them keeping on hopefully on their journey to freedom, accepting their fear both of Pharaoh and of freedom. The companion celebrates with them the unbelievable escape, the resilience that the memory of it gives them afterwards, and the purposeful journey towards a better future.

Those who are left behind by loved ones who relocate often feel abandoned. The companion encourages those who are left to leave good and gracious memories too: to be there to say goodbye, and to bid them farewell with a blessing.

2. Liminality

Liminality is the second stage in a rite of passage, where the individual prepares for resettling; it is, therefore, the most important phase in the process of relocation. It is an ambivalent time for leaver and community, separately and in their dealings together. In the community there may be increased support and affection for those who leave; or there may be anger at being abandoned, or a gradual withdrawal from relationships. Our work may intensify in order to reach completion; or it may seem drained of all colour. In the process of relocating, liminality could be considered the period between taking irreversible action, such as giving notice at work, and taking up a new role in the new community.

It is important to distinguish between liminality, which is a stage of hope-filled preparation towards incorporation into a known future; uncertainty, which has no known resolution; and exile, which includes the hope but not the certainty of returning home, although they all share an uncomfortable feeling of being in limbo. The preparation work of transition would include the acquisition of skills, knowledge, behaviours and attitudes necessary to live meaningfully in the new situation. The women in McCollum's study sabotaged their own future well-being by not investigating their new environment well enough at this transitional stage; it was not surprising, then, that they had difficulty in resettling.

Liminality is a difficult time, because commitments are withdrawn from the old place, social roles are incomplete, social support is uncertain and emotions are unstable. Research by Kathleen Logan on military families in deployment describes an "Emotional Cycle of Deployment".[12] From about six weeks before deployment until about six weeks afterwards, she observed transition states which veered between being highly emotional and angry to being unproductive, irritable, emotionally disorganized and detached. Unsurprisingly, abuse cases increased in the time of transition. Emotions stabilized as routines were established and family patterns settled down, as decisions and tasks were effectively coped with, new activities initiated, and support was developed. Self-confidence increased, although there was also stress and depression; some people got stuck in emotional disorganization. It is important to note that a key variable in military relocation is social support: families of army paymasters, doctors and chaplains, who move individually, find relocation more traumatic than the families of regimental soldiers who move together.

Those who relocate need their companion on the journey through liminality. The companion encourages them to accept that living faithfully both "now" and "not yet" is difficult, but that we can live with contradictions; the companion also reminds those who are relocating that their leaving and

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[12] Kathleen Vestal Logan: "The Emotional Cycle of Deployment" in **Proceedings**, February 1987, p.43-47, quoted in Richard P.Olson and Joe H.Leonard Jr. **Ministry with Families in Flux** (Louisville:Westminster/John Knox, 1990), p.122.

liminality is also painful for those who are left behind, and good leave-taking must be completed for their sakes too. In liminality it is harder but especially important to maintain "sacred space", the predictable rhythms of home life will be maintained so that home can continue to shelter dreams, life together and hospitality.

The wilderness journey, a liminal experience, nearly destroyed the Israelites; but it was also necessary to prepare them for the promised land, to metamorphose from irresponsible slaves into responsible people of the covenant. Similarly, in the liminal phase we accompany our companion as they take risks and hearken to a deeper sense of vocation. Liminality is where choices, commitments and promises are made and kept in spite of the feeling of transitoriness. It is a time for remembering who we are, where we have come from and to where we are travelling with hopes held high. In our examples, the engineer is accompanied in preparing himself mentally for life in Kuwait, even though he is still saying goodbye to life in this country. The bank manager's widow is accompanied as she comes to terms with the fact that she can and must support her family and be a stable mother for her children through this harrowing time; perhaps she can begin to hope for a vocation of her own. Liminality is for orienting in faith toward the future that God holds out for us, never forgetting that there are more possibilities than we can ever imagine.

3. Resettling

The work of resettling means making new commitments to work, school, people and surroundings. New work is begun, new hopes kindled. It is also important to recreate a stable home life, with its rhythms, sacred space, and location of beloved possessions to remind everybody of continuity and glad memories. The children's needs must be given priority. Not only are they more vulnerable; but they are still learning how to deal with change.

Churches need to respond promptly to newcomers in their parish with a welcoming visit from the minister, elder or other member. They may invite the newcomers to worship, Sunday School, evening meetings and holiday activities; children especially appreciate meeting other children in organized surroundings before starting a new school. Some newcomers appreciate the opportunity to formally commit themselves to a new church during Sunday worship, a ritual which strengthens their commitment to the new place; others prefer to simply have their names added to the roll.

If relocation means moving to a better job or nearer to loved ones, joy and hope lend energy to the venture. However, relocation can deplete us of energy. Our elderly widow's "granny flat" may overwhelm her with fresh grief for the home she has lost; McCollum's women could not get unpacked. The dreaded feeling that "Nobody knows who I am," in the new place is deeply disturbing. The companion on this journey is there to affirm continuity of identity through change, to

affirm the power of good memories of love and effectiveness to uphold our companion with hope through challenge and loneliness, to encourage making and keeping commitments and to ensure that we have effective ways of carrying out our vocation.

Ramshaw[13] notes that even the prospect of a house blessing can be the impetus to get boxes unpacked. If the move has been traumatic, a blessing can help to make the transition a time of new beginning. The presence of God is invoked into the midst of our everyday life together. The blessing outlined by Westerhoff and Willimon[14] would consist of a statement of purpose for gathering in the home, appropriate scripture (for example, Genesis 18:1-8, John 11:5; 12:1-3), prayers for family life in each room, and a blessing.

The absence of a sense of continuity from the past may lead to a loss of meaning and purpose and contributes to narcissistic disequilibrium. Our history is often related to our place, so without a place or history we may lose a sense of identity. Resettling means finding ways in which we can meaningfully integrate what is new with what is known. Our memories of love, trust and effectiveness have the power to revitalize and sustain us when we feel lonely and less than competent in the new place. When the prophets called the people to remember the promises of the past, they called them to "remember who you are".

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[13] Ramshaw: **op. cit.**, p.61.
[14] Westerhoff and Willimon: **op. cit.**, p.138.

Resettling means being able to imagine ourselves projected into the future. According to H.R. Niehbuhr, "To be a self is to live toward the future and to do so not only in the form of purposiveness, but also of expectation, anticipation, anxiety, and hope."[15] Making commitments and keeping them is part of that process; Margaret Farley writes, "A remedy for inconsistency and uncertainty, commitment is our wager on the truth of our present insight and the hope of our present love."[16] She emphasizes the importance of memory in commitment. "Forgetfulness," she says, "is a way of slipping into death. Remembering is a way of growing into vision and love. Paradoxically, it is remembering that can give us a future."[17]

The biblical story of Ruth shows her initiative, hard work, commitment, and hopefulness in settling into Bethlehem; it also shows her knowledge of the local customs, and her memory of who she is: a "woman of worth", manifesting *hesed*. We settle into a new place when we work hard, make commitments, know the customs, and view the situation hopefully. Like Ruth, living in loving covenant relationship, and bringing blessing to our community, are ways of living out our vocation.

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[15] H.R.Niebuhr: **The Responsible Self: An Essay in Christian Moral Philosophy** (New York: Harper, 1963), p.92.
[16] Margaret A. Farley: **Personal Commitments** (New York: Harper, 1986), p.17.
[17] Farley, **op. cit.**, p.24.

B. PASTORAL CARE OF COMPLICATED RESPONSES

In chapter one we saw that ungrieved and multiple losses of relocation can contribute to debilitating emotional responses: depression, anxiety, crisis and PTSD. What they have in common is personal hopelessness against overwhelming threat. We will look briefly at the care to be offered in each one by the journeying companion.

1. Depression

Serious depression may need drug treatment; even so, the depressed person needs the companion's care. One aspect of care is to restore hopefulness; we can share the biblical images of God's care for us through unexpected people and events. The companion helps them to recall past successes which will give them confidence for the future. If the depression is related to guilt, the companion reminds them of God's loving forgiveness of past failures and mistakes, and may suggest some kind of restitution. When the depression is related to anger, the companion may show them that honest anger is accepted in the Bible. Expressing the anger, even in a letter that is never sent, is a good way of relieving it.

If the depression is related to a paralysis of action, small manageable steps can be taken which encourage feelings of success. Depressed people tend to be completely self-

absorbed, so they need to be encouraged to make contributions to the wellbeing of other people. They may need companionship in sustaining earlier, unfinished grief work. A good image for depression is the wilderness: lonely, desolate, endangered, "a land unsown"; yet it is also where there is transformation from former bondage to new responsibilities, hope, and the presence of a sustaining, but hidden God.

2. Anxiety

Bowlby observed that insecurely attached people find disruption distressing; they also tend to have ambivalent social relationships which do not provide them with sufficient social support in times of need. Marris points out[18] that the consequences of living in anxiety for the most vulnerable people can be devastating: they withdraw from long-term hopes, they lose a sense of future or purpose, they suffer depression, despair and accumulating stress. Their children's experience of attachment becomes less secure and insecurity becomes socially embedded. The journeying companion would do everything possible to enable good parenting for all children, especially in high-risk places. Pastoral accompaniment here may mean the task of denouncing the structures which make the lives of our most vulnerable people anxious and despairing, such as homelessness, violence, environmental degradation and drugs.

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[18] Peter Marris: "The Social Construction of Uncertainty" in Parkes, Stevenson-Hinde and Marris, **op.cit.**, p.79.

The main problem with anxiety is that it takes the form of an unspecific and menacing threat. The companion would help the anxious individual to face up to the threat realistically and to develop constructive and courageous responses to it; this may mean abandoning immature attitudes and taking on commitments which have to be carried out.

Jennings[19] observes that the very steps that we take to avert anxiety give it greater control over our lives; every defense increases its power. That is why Jesus' admonition to "be not anxious" (Matthew 6:25) is pertinent; he assures us that our life is given to us by God, who gives us all that we need. There are parallels between anxiety and the wilderness experience, as "a land not sown" nor even sowable. In the wilderness there were life-giving resources: not the land or the assurance of it that the Israelites wanted, but there was manna, and there was God's presence.

Sheila Cassidy[20] described her life in a Chilean women's prison, where she might at any time be either tortured or released: a situation of great anxiety. The women showed no tolerance of self-pity or despair: she describes their self-discipline, self-respect, respect for routine, lovely artistic work, fair sharing, compassion for others, and willingness to celebrate. With the commitment of homesteading and of "life

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[19] Theodore W. Jennings Jr: **Life as Worship: Prayer and Praise in Jesus' Name** (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1982), p.113.
[20] Sheila Cassidy: **Audacity to Believe** (London: Fount Paperbacks, 1978).

together" they combatted the soul-destroying anxiety of uncertainty.

3. Crisis

Whether the crisis is brought on by the relocation itself or by an event associated with the relocation, the companion in crisis accompanies the work of tackling both the immediate cause, and the ultimate questions of meaning which arise. The calm and reliable presence of the companion may itself calm the sense of chaos; putting the incident into the context of our companion's life story helps to convey that life will go on in spite of all that has happened, and restores their sense of historical continuity.

In times of crisis the accustomed ways of thinking do not serve to explain new information; and customary social support is not there. The crisis evokes fundamental questions about the meaning of life and the presence of God; and the companion offers hope in the search for answers, as well as recognizing the reality of suffering. Good accompaniment through a crisis can bring greater faith and deeper insight into a person's relationships with others and with God. The person also grows and learns more adaptive behaviour which helps to avoid or cope better with future crises.

Symbols, the Bible, prayer and blessing are vivid resources for someone in "heightened psychological

accessibility". Images from the Exile may echo the individual's sense of longing, search for explanations, and despair; they may also give voice to their sense of outrage and uncertainty. At the same time they recognize the need for God to work something new out of discontinuity, the need for obedience and patience, and the realization that we can live faithfully with contradictions.

Above all, it is important for the companion to keep hope alive, to focus on realistic possibilities, and discern priorities for action if necessary. The companion also encourages the individual to regain control over their lives through small, manageable steps. The crisis does pass in a few weeks: and with companionship it will result in deeper faith and better coping skills, not cynicism or despair.

4. Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder

Traumatized people need strong social support in a safe, accepting and nurturing environment so that they can process their experiences; they may be unable to relate effectively to others for fear of shocking them. The companion needs to be prepared to listen compassionately to a painful story, told perhaps many times.

The companion focuses on facilitating the natural grieving process. The survivor needs to regain control over their life through small, manageable steps. Relaxation

techniques are effective in reducing the autonomic arousal associated with the experience of anxiety. Survivors may develop socially isolating patterns of behaviour with little social support; they may need help in learning social skills. Trauma affects the rest of life; however, within three months many survivors show positive signs of relief from intrusive thoughts and fears.

Sudden trauma shatters our basic life assumptions about the safety and fairness of the world, and about our own goodness. Ultimate questions arise about God's care and love and about the problem of evil. The loving companion is there in the search for answers, and affirming God's loving presence in in the hopefulness that the future holds out. The companion also needs to assure their own self-care, because they may find themselves losing trust in the world, in themselves and in other people.

C. RELOCATION AND ISSUES FOR FAMILIES

One of our essential human characteristics is what Patton and Childs call our **generationality**[21]; we are concerned with the generations that come before and after us. However, our generationality is not restricted to direct parenting: Patton and Childs observe that it means "humanity's place and

[21] John Patton and Brian H.Childs: **Christian Marriage and Family** (Nashville: Abingdon, 1988), p.32.

responsibility within the sequence of history, rather than individual productive abilities."[22], while Richard Dawkins, originator of the selfish gene theory, points out that "genes can buy their way through the (transgenerational) sieve, not only by assisting their own body to become an ancestor but by assisting the body of a relation to become an ancestor."[23]

1. Grandparents

Through knowing our parents and grandparents we are able to have a sense of a historical identity and of our roots or "where we are from" in terms of both genetic and environmental endowment. The older generation traditionally has a stabilizing effect on families and communities, akin to homesteading, through their experience and wisdom and by handing on a unique inheritance of traditions, precious belongings, and memories of places, events and people which root their families in time and place.

One of the casualties of relocation is the relationship of grandchildren and grandparents. Anthropologists describe the grandparenting relationship as an example of the affectionate "joking relationship" which develops between family members where there is no direct authority or competition. Through their grandchildren, grandparents may imagine themselves in some way projected into the future; grandchildren get an idea

[22] Patton and Childs: **ibid.**, p.32.
[23] Richard Dawkins: **River Out of Eden** (London: Weidenfeld and Nicholson, 1995), p.4.

of who they may one day be. Child psychiatrist Arthur Kornhaber affirms the importance of the three generational family in his study of grandparenting:

> "The natural family," he says, "is comprised of people who are rooted in the past, live in the present, and consider and plan for the future. Most people are unaware of the significance of intergenerational relationships, but....I can state categorically that a healthy and loving bond between grandparents and grandchildren is necessary for the emotional health and happiness of all three generations."[24]

Without an abiding interest in their own young, older people may find their role in the community reduced to simply being pensioners or receivers of care; without their forebears to ground them, grandchildren are more vulnerable to the vagaries of their parents, friends and society. In our example of the engineer contemplating a move to Kuwait: his aging parents may fear that their ex-daughter-in-law will not do what is necessary to let them see their grandchildren regularly. The grandparents may worry about their need to be cared for as they grow frailer, a need that should have been cradled in the covenant of care that they have already shown to their family. The journeying companion may have the task of accompanying the grandparents as they face this irrevocable loss.

The church is an ideal place to foster caring relationships between different generations. The companion may encourage

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[24] Arthur Kornhaber: **Between Parents and Grandparents** (New York: St. Martins Press, 1986), p.3, 17, quoted in Patton and Childs: **op. cit.**, p.32.

separated families to keep in frequent touch through letters and telephone calls. She may encourage the grandparents to see the importance of developing committed, caring relationships with young people nearby. Similarly, the companion may encourage the children to get to know and love the older people in their new location. We have many opportunities to live "life together": they do not have to be restricted to our own family.

2. Families

The Christian tradition affirms the kind of commitment, loyalty and care that hold the family together. However, the Gospel (Matthew 12:46-49) also sets limits on the family and any human relationship. The family provides for the basic human needs for care and love of its members, but it cannot be an end in itself; each family member has their own vocation to fulfil. Patton and Childs[25] observe that our work in the world is conditioned by our family responsibilities, sometimes yielding to them and sometimes having to neglect them.

Anderson and Mitchell[26] observe the act of leaving home as a necessary act of attaining individuality. When we leave our childhood home, they say, we have to do it in a way that we can go home again on adult terms, not simply as flight from responsibility or authority. Leaving home is balanced by

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[25] Patton and Childs: **op. cit.**, p.219.
[26] Herbert Anderson and Kenneth R. Mitchell: **Leaving Home** (Louisville, Westminster/John Knox Press, 1993), p.26.

the blessing of our elders, the grace of letting go with love. They note[27] that the act of blessing acknowledges that there is a particular person with authority to bless, and it is a ritual of continuity which reaffirms ties between parents and children. It also conveys a wish for the leaver's success and a prayer for protection and God's companionship in the future.

Anderson[28] observes that family stability through continuity provides a context for change. Stability is passed on into the uncertain future in many ways, including the recollection of stories and family legends, traditions, name giving, and the preservation of treasured possessions.

Families manage change and live through crises in various ways: through belief in change, through their understanding of the relationship between continuity and change, through being able to grieve their losses, through rituals of change, and through weathering other changes. Though they hope that change will be good, they know that there is no assurance of it; our only assurance is that God will be there with us.

The journeying companion may accompany the relocating family as it grieves its losses but also celebrates the loving stability that it has, and the gains that come with change. The companion may remind them of other changes they have weathered successfully and encourages family communication about the changes going on in its members.

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[27] Anderson and Mitchell: **ibid.**, p.107.
[28] Herbert Anderson: **The Family and Pastoral Care** (Philadelphia: Fortress Press,1984), p.42.

One issue that couples need to be aware of is that they may be living different images as they relocate. We have noted that men become "transitionally unavailable" during relocation, concentrating on their work, perhaps too much. This may have much to do with the male task of defining his self by separating himself. In contrast, during relocation, women feel much pain at the loss of dear friends and home, experience emotional upheaval as they sort and pack beloved possessions, and immerse themselves in the wellbeing of their families: perhaps too much. This may have much to do with the female task of defining herself through relations and connection. The companion can remind couples that both metaphors are valuable: of separation and connection, of journeying and homesteading. They complement each other; they do not have to be at the expense of the other.

3. Children

Jesus showed his particular love for children by blessing them and holding them up as a model of the Reign of God; we, too, need to show special concern for uprooting children. We have seen that the way that we learn to deal with loss and change as children tends to set a pattern for how we will cope, or not, for the rest of our lives. Enabling children to manage change and crisis helps them to grow in competence and resilience for future challenges.

Children always need a sheltering home and participation in "life together" with their families, but they especially need reassurance in times of stress. Families may need companionable support in remembering that reliable routine, relaxation and family life together combats stress and creates a sense of stability when there is uncertainty. Families need to remember that children's normal developmental needs for healthy food, enough sleep, comfort in distress, good friends, safe play, and opportunities to learn at their own level, continue even at times of upheaval. The homeless mother, even though she despairs of finding a place to call her own, is encouraged to attend to her daughter's need for her attentive love and encouragement as she learns, as well as her need for nourishing food and warmth.

Children need to feel that they belong both to the family group and to their friendship group. During relocation children may be shunted around, ignored or overprotected by adults, making them feel excluded from the family. At the same time their friends may withdraw emotionally from their friendship, so that the child feels abandoned by both family and friends. At the other extreme, when a significant adult is in crisis Anderson[29] notes that the child may find him/herself elevated to the role of the 'parental child', an unhealthy situation if it continues permanently; it has to be temporary and revocable. The bank manager's daughters may have to take on adult responsibilities occasionally while their mother grieves, but not continuously.

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[29] Anderson: **ibid.**, p.86.

Children need to believe in their own competence by taking risks and challenges which are valued by their loved ones. In relocation, everyone's feelings of competency are challenged; like adults, children may feel out of control. If significant adults leave the child out of what is going on, the child's perception of his/her own inadequacy is confirmed. However, if the child is included in responding to the challenge, if his/her willing help is accepted, then his/her resilience is greatly enhanced. They feel that their abilities are trusted by adults, and they face the future more confidently. Their exhilaration and hope can often buoy up the burdened adults around them.

Lester[30] observes that, like adults, children cope most courageously with what they know; it is what they are forced to imagine that provokes most anxiety. They need to deal with the truth at their own level of comprehension. Adults may misguidedly overprotect children by misrepresenting the truth and withholding information. Children are not oblivious to tensions and problems; they often realize the deception, and end up doubting themselves and the adults. Jackson[31] notes the importance of being completely honest, yet reassuring, when dealing with children and loss.

Children may need somewhere to explore their feelings and to express strong emotions; a journeying companion can

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[30] Andrew D. Lester: **Pastoral Care with Children in Crisis** (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1985), p.52.
[31] Edgar N.Jackson: **The Many Faces of Grief** (London: SCM Press, 1978), p.83.

share their doubts and fears, and console them with words of hope and love. Children can distort and misinterpret a situation; they can come to wrong conclusions about the cause, the results, and their own role in it. In these ways a change may have a destructive impact on children; it is all the more important, therefore, for them to feel constantly loved, valued in their contribution, and aware of the truth.

Like adults, children need opportunities to say goodbye, to go through a transition process, and to resettle. They learn how to cope with loss and grief, together with the family and alone; they learn how to let go with thankfulness, and leave good memories. A ritual of moving may help them too. Children, like adults, feel loss and grief at having to leave so much that is beloved and familiar, perhaps abruptly; they may miss their grandparents and pets greatly. For children the process of grieving is more difficult if the relocation is unexpected or the relationship is overdependent, reflecting insecurity about attachments, as the relationships of so many children who move frequently are. Sudden, unintelligible events which disturb our attachments are doubly threatening, especially if they shake the child's faith in the fundamental benevolence of the world. If we as companions can provide supportive relationships, the child is less overwhelmed and makes an easier recovery. We have seen that good memories help us progress from one place to another. Sharing memories in families may bring them together in grief, which is reassuring to the child; it also affirms the historic continuity of the family.

Relocation is easier for children if they can learn as much as possible about the new place during transition. Social survival in the new place may mean having the right brand of shoes. They need reassurance that it takes time to make friends again, to become familiar with a new place, to learn the safe and dangerous places, to understand the system. Some children may benefit from coaching in social skills; Goleman writes, "What matters most for whether a child is accepted or not is how well he or she is able to enter into the group's frame of reference, sensing what kind of play is in flow, what out of place."[32]

A journeying companion can help children in upheaval to gain spiritual insight in times of crisis. Biblical and other stories give children strong images to relate their own stories to; ideas like grace, blessing and forgiveness make sense in times of uncertainty. Relocation can be a time of crisis for children; it can also be a time of unexpected blessing, with the company of a journeying companion, as they achieve spiritual insights and grow in competence and maturity.

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[32] Daniel Goleman: **Emotional Intelligence** (New York: Bantam, 1995), p.123.

D. CARING FOR OUR NEIGHBOUR

While we need to be attentive to all whose journeys we share[33], there is a call and a command to show hospitality to needy strangers which we cannot ignore. The blessings that we have are bestowed on us for our needier brother and sister. Our church will be held to account for its care, or lack of it, towards those who are helpless to help themselves; deliberately walking by "on the other side" is immoral. For the very reason that they do not have the resources to help themselves, we must now consider refugees and those who are homeless.

Because we are looking at a situation which is not companionship but compassion, this time we will use that other beloved journeying image: the Good Samaritan. Three aspects of the image deserve to be highlighted:

There is the generosity of his compassion. Scarry notes that imagination and compassion are both essentially generous. He showed open willingness to be interrupted and inconvenienced. He also poured out his oil and wine with generosity to cleanse the wounds. Generosity is restorative because of the complete emptiedness of the injured one; it is also reminiscient of maternal generosity, and of God's abundant grace. Through his companionship, the Samaritan

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[33] Simone Weil describes the character of Christian life as "attentive" existence in **On Science, Necessity, and the Love of God** (Oxford, 1968), pp.148-159.

started to restore the man's world which had been shattered by the violence of the robbers and by the indifference of the priest and the Levite.

Second, the Samaritan bound his wounds, covered his naked body and provided shelter, which restored the boundaries of body, dignity and safety, which are aspects of home that we saw in chapter two. He took him to the innkeeper for shelter from the elements and protection from the robbers; inn and innkeeper, *hospes* and host, themselves a sign of the civilization that had been shattered by the robbers. In her study of torture, Scarry describes the healing effect of benign presence while the tortured person restores themselves psychically.[34] The Samaritan carried out the tasks of mothering and home: the healing touch, shelter, protection and generosity without expectations just because the other needs it. Perhaps he began also to restore hope in the God who sends comfort through the unexpected and the despised.

Third, the Samaritan left the man assured that he was well enough to carry out his own unique vocation. He also restored him to his own community and family, back where someone was waiting for their father, brother, husband, or neighbour. Healed, he now has the responsibility to be the neighbour to others.

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[34] Elaine Scarry: **The Body in Pain: The Making and Unmaking of the World** (New York: Oxford University Press, 1985), p.6.

1. Refugees in Britain

Refugees who seek asylum in Europe face policies which reflect the growing xenophobia and ethnocentricism of its citizens.[35] Refugees and migrants are easy scapegoats for social ills, while their contribution to our economic and social life is easily ignored. Citizens consider their claims for political asylum to be suspect; they fear that foreigners will take over their jobs; and they fear being overwhelmed by refugees, although resident foreigners in the EC average less than 5%, and in Europe and North America there are only half a million asylum seekers.[36]

The Home Office expects 40,000 applications for asylum this year; however, the legislation which came into effect in the U.K. on 5th February 1996 cuts off benefits for those awaiting appeal of their asylum cases. The result is that the poorest asylum-seekers are denied the right of appeal.

These cuts to benefits have been criticized both by the churches and by the UNHCR. Many applicants for asylum arrive here shoeless in midwinter; others are starving. Many are professionals who want to work but whose qualifications are not recognized here. There are women and children whose husbands are imprisoned or missing; they may have witnessed them being killed, or tortured, or they may have been tortured

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[35] Dietmar Mieth and Lisa Sowle Cahill (eds): **Migrants and Refugees** (London and Maryknoll: SCM Press and Orbis, 1993), preface.
[36] Silvano M. Tomasi: "The World-Wide Context of Migration: The Example of Asia" in Mieth and Cahill: **ibid.**

themselves. All the asylum-seekers are traumatized and extremely vulnerable.

Taking as our model the image of the Good Samaritan, our pastoral response to refugees today would mean generosity, binding, and empowering them to carry out their vocation. First, seeing with generous compassion means seeing the otherness of another person as good, not as a threat, or an inconvenience, or a means to our own end; and seeing them with compassion for their suffering. It means accepting our responsibilities towards them by reaching out and touching the other. It also means acknowledging our own need of others: like Boaz, like Israel, we need the blessings that the despised aliens can offer us.

Second, there is the binding of wounds of all kinds. Distributing food, clothes and medicine has always been a ministry of the church. Wounds are bound by providing literal asylum, shelter from enemies and protection from the elements. Another type of shelter is our advocacy for refugees, showing solidarity with and speaking out for those who cannot look after themselves. Binding wounds means helping refugees with lawyers, bank accounts, accommodation, and writing letters with them. It also means befriending them: Perico Rodriguez, a human rights worker with the Refugee Council, observes[37]: "Making a British friend can be more powerful than ten hours of therapy."

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[37] Perico Rodriguez in the **Sunday Times Magazine,** 18th February 1996.

Many refugees have experienced torture and we are called to bind their wounds too. Torture is the deliberate infliction of physical pain, massive and unlimited, in order to elicit information. An essential pastoral task is to understand that "confession" in circumstances of intolerable pain is not betrayal; Amnesty International missions never ask prisoners what they were required to confess, nor whether they did confess. Scarry observes that "while those who withstand torture without confessing should be honoured, those who do confess are not dishonoured by and should not be dishonoured for their act."[38]

Survivors of torture may need help in living with bodies maimed by torture: scars, deafness, blindness, and nightmares. It takes time for them to recover respect for the boundaries between public and private behaviour, appropriate and inappropriate behaviour. One of the tragedies of torture is that broken people may remain terribly isolated or go on to hurt others; families of people who return from torture may need pastoral help in leaving home.

Those who have been tortured need to recover a sense of self, which has been threatened or destroyed by pain and by their shame at betraying all their dearest loyalties. Their sense of self is restored by treating them with dignity and respect. They may need to work at recovering their feelings and compassion for others. They may need to deal with fear: nightmares and panic attacks are almost always reported in

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[38] Scarry: **op. cit.**, p.330.

survivors. There is the slow recovery of the meaning of language. Part of the work of Amnesty International is "to restore to each person tortured his or her voice... to return to the prisoner his most elemental political ground as well as his psychic content and density"[39].

Third, we can ensure that people who are refugees are enabled to carry out their own vocation, whether this means finding ways to return to their own country voluntarily within a political solution, which is what most refugees want, or finding ways to settle here. Though it is not our decision where they will settle, we can encourage in them a flexibility of spirit that comes with hope, once more in the words of Jeremiah 29:7: "Seek the welfare of any city to which I have carried you off, and pray to the Lord for it; on its welfare your welfare will depend." Most of the Bosnian refugees have worked and studied hard to put up homes and put down roots here, in spite of not knowing what the future holds.

Rodriguez observes that "Healing begins when you stop hating. You never forgive, but you stop being consumed by hate." He knew he was healed when he stopped being a "victim" and started helping others with human rights. Being a victim is a liminal feeling, he observes; to restore refugees to human community, we need to recognize their uniqueness, their achievements and their capacity instead of thinking of them as undifferentiated and passive victims.

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[39] Scarry: **ibid.**, p.50.

Buijs[40] notes that employment which enables integration with the settled community, and which promotes cooperation, not competition, among the refugees, and language education and skills-building for the adults and education for the children enable successful integration and opportunities to carry out their vocation. The Bosnian refugees who settled here say that the start of full-time work and paying taxes made them feel settled, enabling them to take control over their own lives. We also need to work to remove the causes of flight by promoting general political stability, respect for human rights and aid for social and economic development.

2. Homeless People

When we offer shelter to the homeless we offer shelter to Christ himself (Matthew 25:35). In our day more people than ever are threatened with homelessness. There are many reasons for this, but two principal reasons are the reduction in secure, full-time employment and the pressures on family life. In spite of the fact that opinion polls show that the general public is seriously concerned about it, homelessness is not high on the political agenda. The building of new, affordable houses to rent will drop again this year, and the Government plans to introduce legislation to end the duty on local authorities to provide permanent housing for homeless families. This will probably result in families spending much

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[40] Gina Buijs: **Migrant Women: Crossing Boundaries and Changing Identities** (Providence and London: Berg Publishers, 1993), p.6.

more time in temporary accommodation, with its accompanying damage to physical and mental health, education and to family life itself.

We have seen that homelessness means so much more than having no secure, private place to live; it also means not having a place in society. It means not having privacy in which to create a home, build family relationships, shelter dreams, find refuge, and grow. The lack of affordable housing threatens the dignity and the rights of our most vulnerable people; in addition, homeless people are likely to be blamed for their condition and to be the object of abuse, stigmatization and isolation.

The study "People Need Homes"[41] shows that the majority of homeless people are not older men with alcohol problems; a sizable number are young people and there are many homeless families with children, especially under twelve years old. The homeless have a disrupted and insecure experience of housing because they cannot stay long in one place. They try squats, or they stay temporarily with friends or relatives, and they stay in council-provided bed and breakfast accommodation, and some have tried privately rented places. Women and children who are victims of domestic violence move into refuges, then into a series of council-provided bed and breakfasts.

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[41] Churches National Housing Coalition: **People Need Homes** (Manchester, 1995).

According to the study, none of the homeless knew where they would be in twelve months; they had a deep sense of insecurity and anger. More than half had been homeless for more than one year. It is also worth noting that most had become homeless, not because they thought they would be able to jump the queue for a council flat, but because they had been forced to flee difficult and dangerous situations, whether domestic violence, difficult foster parents, or an abusive landlord.

The homeless have absolutely nowhere that offers safety and security. Jahiel[42] points out that the struggle to find subsistence and shelter and to protect themselves and their possessions may become so time- and energy-consuming that it leaves no room for other activities. Additionally, injuries, illness, malnutrition and lack of sleep decrease their resourcefulness and capabilities. The experience of repeated failure, rejection, or being hurt in a variety of ways leads to apathy, depression, extreme suspiciousnness and despair.

The local authority may place homeless families in temporary accommodation for up to two years, with no choice of housing at the end of that wait. The effect of living in temporary accommodation is crushing. Those who live there have difficulty in getting and keeping a job or making other plans, because of their uncertainty about how long they will be there. They get separated from family, friends and cultural

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[42] Rene I. Jahiel: "The Situation of Homelessness" in Richard D. Bingham, Roy E. Green and Sammis B. White: **The Homeless in Contemporary Society** (Beverly Hills: Sage, 1987), p.105.

and religious links and support. The children's schooling is frequently interrupted. They have difficulties in maintaining contact with the Homeless Persons Unit, social services and the children's schools. Health care is disrupted, and voting rights are lost.

Temporary accommodation has a severe impact on children in particular; it is damaging and traumatic for them to live with the direct threat or experience of homelessness. They are vulnerable to accidents due to overcrowding, disrepair and lack of play space; they are also more vulnerable to abuse and violence. Children also suffer repeated infections due to poor amenities and unsatisfactory living arrangements. Stress-related mental health problems are also common both for children and their parents.

In the footsteps of the Samaritan, our pastoral response must be, first, the look of generosity and compassion. We may not ignore those who are homeless or blame them for their situation. It may be inconvenient for us to stop and do something, but if homelessness is a commendably high priority with the public, then it is part of our covenant of care to put pressure on the politicians so that it is an unavoidable political concern too. The study notes that hostels and projects for the homeless are doing everything they can with excellent support from volunteers. However, what the overwhelming majority of homeless people want is, simply, a place to call their own and all that that means.

Second, binding the wounds: that means not only binding the broken bodies, but also restoring the lost sense of self through dignity and respect, and providing an overarching shelter so that inner healing can take place. Merilyn Jones, a young girl who had tried to commit suicide describes her feelings when she is given a room in a Christian transition home:

> "You've been reduced to nothingness...You're as dependent on the Transition Home's help as a child is on its mother. You're welcomed by people who make you feel accepted....you can close a door behind you, and experience the sweetness of solitude....You're home--you're safe....To put your clothes away means you can stay for awhile. Your roommate gives you space to be alone, she knows what comes next. It's the unspoken: you lay down on your bed and curl up into a fetal position. Like the child you've become. As you lie there, your mind, body and soul begin to relax. Then as you feel life entering your body again, you begin to uncurl from that fetal position and the need to stand erect and take charge of your own life replaced the stress that had caused your system to shut down and cease to function. It doesn't take long, maybe a day or two."[43]

It also means binding the wounds of families, so that they can enjoy sacred space together within safe boundaries, and so that children may know unconditional love and learn resilience. In our examples, the mother needs to be cared for and encouraged to provide her attentive presence to her daughter, who needs a loving mother even more than she needs shelter.

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[43] Merilyn Jones in **Open Door Newsletter**, Columbus, Georgia, Easter 1996.

Third, it means providing a situation where they can fulfil their unique vocation in the world, where they can have a home to call their own without being dependent on the soul-destroying uncertainty of temporary accommodation. The need for permanent housing is so basic a precondition for human development and wellbeing, for families with children in particular, that it must be a statutory right, not a privilege. It is an urgent pastoral task to do everything necessary to improve this situation.

IMPLICATIONS

We have looked at a model of relocation which honours our loves in the former place and honours our vocation and hope of love in the new place. We have also looked at the pastoral care of complicated responses to relocation, and some of the issues for families.

Finally, in the light of our call to use the blessings that we have been given for others, we have looked at our response to refugees and the homeless. Situations which seem to be painful nd despairing can be brought to life with companionship and with images of hope and faith and blessing.

CONCLUSIONS

Our age is characterized by massive mobility. Populations migrate as they look for safety, employment or food; individuals seek prosperity, adventure or better circumstances as they relocate to other places.

In the Christian tradition, our loves and attachments are seen as good, a sign that we are loving creatures made in the image of God. Even if a relocation is voluntary and desired, uprooting is painful if it involves losing much that we love. It is more traumatic if it is associated with a crisis such as death, divorce or redundancy, or if there are multiple losses involved.

Losses have to be grieved for individuals to be able to settle down in the next place. Unmourned losses may result in complicated emotional responses such as depression and crisis, or in a reluctance to love again. The cumulative effect of mobility is that our society is suffering from an increasing sense of rootlessness which manifests itself in indifference, destructiveness and ecological disaster.

We have looked at the importance of "home" for human stability; we have also looked at biblical images of uprooting and homelessness. The Christian tradition affirms the willingness to uproot and journey in response to vocation; it

also affirms the values of commitment, covenant, hospitality and stewardship of the earth which are expressed in rootedness and homesteading. We have maintained that the images of uprooting and of homesteading should not be in competition with each other. We need them both to be companion images in our life activities: the daily rhythm of work and home, the balance between private realm and public life, the developmental procession from childhood security to adult venture and on to ultimate rest. The images of journeying and homesteading echo through gender issues, too, although oversimplification is to be avoided.

We have suggested a model of relocating which honours the love of the old place and the call to vocation in the new place; and we have suggested as an appropriate image of pastoral care, the Companion on the Journey, who shares hope, repose and suffering with those in upheaval.

We have examined the issues for uprooting families and especially for children, in the light of Bowlby's attachment theory, observing their need both for security and for opportunities to grow in resilience. Finally, we have looked briefly at our responsibility to offer hospitality both to refugees that come to Britain and to homeless people in the light of the Good Samaritan image.

Our world is increasingly uprooted and mobile, but humans do not have to become rootless or destructive as a result. The Christian tradition has images which acknowledge the

contradictions and the suffering of uprooting, but yet inspire greater hope and deeper faith in us. They also call us to greater responsibility to care for our neighbour and to live in covenant relationship with each other, with the world and with God.

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